2CDs 21 PAGES OF COVERDISC REVIEWS AND LISTINGS

www.pc-utilities.co.uk

PC Utilities

TOP 40 HOTTEST MP3 TOOLS

The best new programs to rip, edit, burn and play your digital music

COMPLETE INTERNET PROTECTION TOOLKIT

208 RELIABLE SECURITY TOOLS

BRAND NEW COMPILATION PC Utilities • 57

562 ESSENTIAL PROGRAMS

PLUS: FOUR FULL PROGRAMS WORTH US$139

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Easy Password Manager 1.18SE

PicaLoader 1.30SE
Download images en masse

MAXIVISTA

MaxiVista 1SE
Double your desktop space using a spare desktop or laptop PC

THE COMPLETE WEB SECURITY SUITE

Defend your system against viruses, spyware & hackers

NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTIONS

The latest flat screen LCD monitors put to the test

PAINT SHOP PRO 9

20 tips to help you master Jasc's latest photo editor

PLUS:

The complete guide to iTunes
Information managers on test
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Unlimited site traffic	✓	✓
Latest firewall protection	✓	✓
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SSH secure access		
5 star online control panel	✓	✓
Bandwidth monitoring	✓	✓
• NEW **Graphical web stats**	✓	✓
Point unlimited domains to your web space	✓	✓
Bulk domain name registration account	✓	✓
Windows 2003 I156	✓	
Red Hat Enterprise Linux		✓
SITE BUILDING & SCRIPTING		
• NEW **ASP scripting**	✓	
PHP, Perl CGI	✓	✓
Python CGI		✓
Compiled CGI and SSI	✓	
FrontPage Extensions 2002	✓	✓
Easy site creation tool - 3 pages included	✓	✓
Media streaming (option)	✓	✓
Raw log files	✓	✓
XML, SHTML (Windows) & DHTML	✓	✓
ODBC database access	✓	
Microsoft SQL Server support	✓	✓
MySQL support (option)	✓	✓
EMAIL		
• NEW **200 POP3 mailboxes**	✓	✓
Auto-responders	✓	✓
Unlimited forwarding & email aliases	✓	✓
• NEW **3 Advanced mailboxes**	✓	✓
• NEW **Roaming SMTP access**	✓	✓
• NEW **Spam filtering** (3 mailboxes)	✓	✓
Virus scanning (3 mailboxes)	✓	✓
Web mail	✓	✓
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• NEW **5 FTP access accounts**	✓	✓
Unlimited site traffic	✓	✓
Latest firewall protection	✓	✓
Redundant server disks	✓	✓
• NEW **SSL secure web space**	✓	✓
SSH secure access		
5 star online control panel	✓	✓
Bandwidth monitoring	✓	✓
Graphical web stats	✓	✓
Point unlimited domains to your web space	✓	✓
Bulk domain name registration account	✓	✓
Windows 2003 I156	✓	
Red Hat Enterprise Linux		✓
SITE BUILDING & SCRIPTING		
• NEW **ASP.NET & .NET Framework 1.1**	✓	
PHP, Perl CGI	✓	✓
Python CGI		✓
Compiled CGI and SSI	✓	
ASP scripting	✓	
FrontPage Extensions 2002	✓	✓
• NEW **Custom error pages**	✓	✓
Easy site creation tool - 3 pages included	✓	✓
Media streaming (option)	✓	✓
• NEW **Password protection**	✓	✓
Raw log files	✓	✓
XML, SHTML (Windows) & DHTML	✓	✓
ODBC database access	✓	✓
Microsoft SQL Server support (option)	✓	✓
• NEW **MySQL 150 MB**		✓
EMAIL		
• NEW **600 POP3 mailboxes**	✓	✓
Auto-responders	✓	✓
Unlimited forwarding & email aliases	✓	✓
• NEW **5 Advanced mailboxes**	✓	✓
• NEW **Roaming SMTP access**	✓	✓
• NEW **Spam filtering** (5 mailboxes)	✓	✓
Virus scanning (5 mailboxes)	✓	✓
Web mail	✓	✓
• NEW **Advanced SMS alerts**	✓	✓

FREE instant setup

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Expert

~~£19.99~~

£15.99

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WEBSITE & DOMAIN		
• NEW **5 GB web space**	✓	✓
• NEW **unlimited sub-domains**	✓	✓
• NEW **50 FTP access accounts**	✓	✓
Unlimited site traffic	✓	✓
Latest firewall protection	✓	✓
Redundant server disks	✓	✓
• NEW **SSL secure web space**	✓	✓
SSH secure access		
5 star online control panel	✓	✓
Bandwidth monitoring	✓	✓
• NEW **Graphical web stats**	✓	✓
Point unlimited domains to your web space	✓	✓
• NEW **Load-balancing**	✓	✓
Bulk domain name registration account	✓	✓
Windows 2003 I156	✓	
Red Hat Enterprise Linux		✓
SITE BUILDING & SCRIPTING		
• NEW **ASP.NET & .NET Framework 1.1**	✓	
PHP, Perl CGI	✓	✓
Python CGI		✓
Compiled CGI and SSI	✓	
ASP scripting	✓	
FrontPage Extensions 2002	✓	✓
• NEW **Custom error pages**	✓	✓
Easy site creation tool - 3 pages included	✓	✓
Media streaming (option)	✓	✓
Password protection	✓	✓
• NEW **Advanced password protection**	✓	✓
Raw log files	✓	✓
XML, SHTML (Windows) & DHTML	✓	✓
ODBC database access	✓	✓
• NEW **Microsoft SQL Server 150 MB**	✓	
• NEW **MySQL 300 MB**		✓
EMAIL		
• NEW **Unlimited POP3 mailboxes**	✓	✓
Auto-responders	✓	✓
Unlimited forwarding & email aliases	✓	✓
• NEW **5 Advanced mailboxes**	✓	✓
• NEW **Roaming SMTP access**	✓	✓
• NEW **1 Exchange mailbox**	✓	✓
• NEW **Spam filtering** (5 mailboxes)	✓	✓
Virus scanning (5 mailboxes)	✓	✓
Web mail	✓	✓
• NEW **Advanced SMS alerts**	✓	✓

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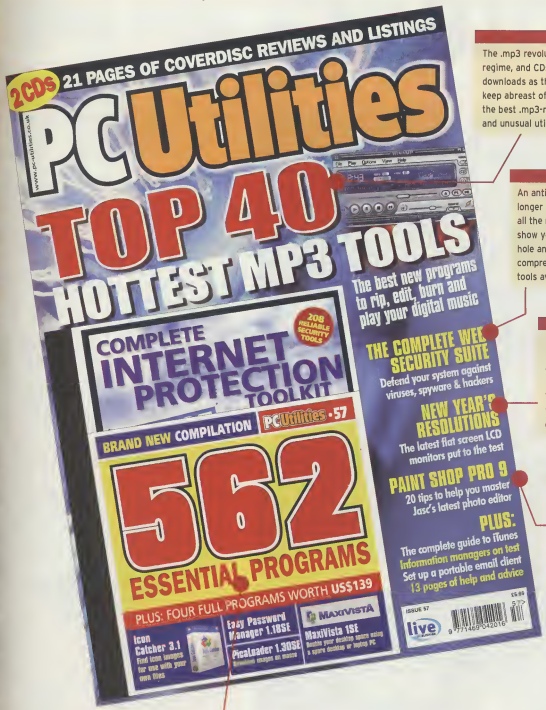

The .mp3 revolution has all but overthrown the old regime, and CDs are fast being replaced by digital downloads as the music format of choice. Ensure you keep abreast of the changing tide with our run-down of the best .mp3-related players, editors, management tools and unusual utilities.

An antivirus suite and personal firewall may no longer be enough to protect your system against all the malware circulating round the Internet. We show you how to protect every port, patch every hole and block every threat with the most comprehensive selection of Internet protection tools available.

Why put up with eye strain any longer? Isn't it about time you ditched your tired old CRT monitor in favour of a modern LCD display. We put some of the latest 17in and 19in models to the test and show you why a flat screen monitor might not cost as much as you think.

The latest version of Jasc's powerful image editor, Paint Shop Pro is now out on the shelves and is sure to find its way onto thousands of PCs in the coming months. Ensure you make the most of this excellent tool with our essential tips selection.

This month's double CD collection brings you an outstanding selection of more than 750 of the latest freeware and shareware tools across our regular utilities disc and this issue's Complete Internet Protection Toolkit.

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PC Utilities

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The complete Internet protection toolkit 18

An antivirus suite and firewall are no longer enough to stem the tide of hackers, Trojans, spyware and browser hijackers flooding the Net. In this feature we detail the steps you can take, and the tools you need, to ensure you remain adequately protected.

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We seek out solutions to some of your problems related to the Service Pack 2 addition, Windows Firewall.

Coverdiscs 562 quality programs

This month's double CD edition brings you both a disc full of over 560 of the best new freeware and shareware releases, essential utilities and important updates and a Complete Internet Protection Toolkit CD with everything you need to keep you secure online. We've also found space for four superb full programs worth over US$139.

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If you're having trouble with this month's coverdisc or want to know how to get started with it, the Coverdisc explorer pages should be your first port of call.

Coverdisc listings 100
Check out these pages for a complete breakdown of all the programs on our coverdisc.

News

We take a look at the future of computing in our monthly news round-up

Winamp silenced

Though Winamp is still one of the world's most popular digital music players, its future now looks in jeopardy. Following a fall out between the remaining members of the Nullsoft development team and parent company AOL, Winamp has been left with only a skeleton staff to deal with minor bug fixes; no further developments to the project are expected.

Winamp was acquired by AOL five years ago to give the company a foothold in the burgeoning .mp3 market. However, it soon became apparent the Nullsoft staff would have problems settling into the giant corporation. Instead of informal meetings held in coffee shops, they had to adapt to the bureaucracy of a large organisation. Even so, Nullsoft tried to carry on with business as usual, working on several controversial projects (including the file-sharing software Gnutella, and the encrypted file-sharing tool, WASTE) without seeking AOL's approval.

Winamp 5 was released in December 2003 to widespread acclaim, and put the software back at the top of most people's list of favourite media players. However, many Nullsoft employees have since fallen victim to AOL cutbacks and only three Nullsoft staff remain at AOL today. Without the presence and passion of the team that created the program in the first place, it seems unlikely Winamp will be further developed.

http://www.

www.winamp.com
Download Winamp here

Winamp 5 could well be the last major update to the classic .mp3 player

AVG update

The excellent AVG Anti-Virus Free Edition has been given a fresh lick of paint after five years of only minor improvements. In version 7 of the program, its interface has been completely redesigned to make it easier to use and the software has been enhanced with new features, too. These include an improved scanning engine and a virus definitions update feature that doesn't require you to reboot every time. The program also includes a new email scanner to protect you from viral attachments.

If you're currently an AVG 6 user, there's an added incentive to upgrade. After the end of December 2004, AVG's maker, Grisoft, will cease to offer program updates or new virus definitions for version 6. It's therefore vital that you upgrade to version 7 to keep your system protected against the latest threats. You'll find the program on this month's coverdisc, under the Security & antivirus tab.

AVG Anti-Virus Free Edition is better than many commercial antivirus programs

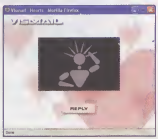
http://www.

www.grisoft.com
For more information on AVG

You've got video-mail

Vismail.com has devised a new method of incorporating video clips into HTML code by compressing the footage up to 5,500 times. This compression makes it possible to send video messages that are embedded into emails rather than attaching the files separately to the message text. The recipient can view your video as soon as it arrives and they don't require any additional software to do so. Vismail video messages are much smaller than attached video clips, so you don't have to worry about them eating up storage space in the inboxes of your friends and family.

The Home edition of the Vismail software is subscription-based and costs £6.99 for one month's use. See the website for full pricing details and information on how to sign up for the service.



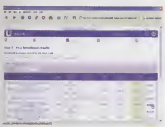
You can choose from a variety of background skins for your video message

http://www.

www.vismail.com
Find out more about Vismail.com video-emails here

Broadband calculator

If you're contemplating getting broadband but are unsure of what deals are available in your area, save yourself a great deal of time and effort by using the free UK broadband calculator service at uSwitch.com. It calculates the annual cost of different service providers based on how often you will use the Net and what you will use it for. The figures displayed include all the setup charges you are required to pay, and the cost of a router and broadband modem (if required). It clearly shows that many seemingly low cost providers aren't such good value when you take into account the large initial costs they usually charge.



Quickly find out what the best broadband deals are in your area

http://www.

www.uswitch.com
For the broadband calculator

Images to go

Transcend has released a portable pocket-size digital photo viewer called the Digital Album with a 2.5in high resolution colour screen. With the device it's possible to keep a copy of your photo collection with you at all times, and share your images with family and friends. You can transfer images from your PC or use its built-in 8-in1 card reader to copy photos directly from a digital camera. The Digital Album has a 20GB internal hard drive, and a video-out port, enabling you to connect the viewer to your TV. A supplied remote control enables you to flick through your on-screen images from the comfort of your sofa. The Digital Album costs €400 (around £280)

Carry your photos everywhere with these pocket size viewers

Epson has also brought out a similar, but better equipped product, called the Epson P-2000 Photo Viewer. It has a much larger 3.8in screen and a 40GB hard drive, and is not only capable of displaying images but can play back movies and music files, too. As you might expect, it is also more expensive than Transcend's model, costing £349.

http://www.

www.transcend.nl
For more about the Transcend Digital Album
www.epson.co.uk
For more about the Epson P-2000 Photo Viewer

Media Center software

The first commercially available add-on software for Windows XP Media Center Edition PCs has just been released by KMS Software. World Trivia game is the first release, with a collection of software to help you organise your life due out shortly. The organisation software will consist of an address book, calendar and a program for storing To Do lists – they will be available as separate packages or together as a Home Organiser suite. All the programs are controlled using the Media Center remote control and are designed for families to sit down and use together. World Trivia costs £19.99 and a demo version is available for download.

World Trivia tests your knowledge about all sorts of subjects

http://www.

www.mediacenterware.co.uk/downloads/trivia.asp
Download a trial version of World Trivia game here

The big picture

The release of a new 5 megapixel digital camera wouldn't usually make the news pages but Epson's L-500V is an exception as it doubles up as a photo viewer, too. Instead of equipping the camera with a small screen for previewing images, Epson has opted for a large 2.5in high definition, 256 pixels per inch display. The large, clear display enables you to view the finer details of your images, which helps you compose and focus your shots more accurately. The camera is available now for £279.

The L-500V's 2.5in screen is ideal for viewing images

http://www.

www.epson.co.uk
Find out more about the Epson L-500V here

Security tools

Staganos has extended its range of computer security titles with two new products. First up is Steganos AntiSpyware 7, which removes over 27,000 malware products including Trojans, password spies and spyware. As well as scanning for spyware, the software performs realtime scans of your browser to prevent your bookmarks and homepage being changed without your knowledge. The other new release is Steganos AntiVirus, which, rather than re-inventing the wheel, uses the well-established Kaspersky antivirus software to root out viruses, Trojans, backdoor exploits and other malicious software. Both products cost £24.99 to download, or £29.99 for boxed versions.

http://www.

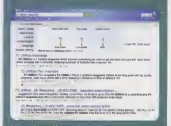
www.steganos.com
Download full versions of the software here

In Development

MSN Search

Google has become synonymous with internet searches, and many people wouldn't think of using another service. However, it has faced increasing competition in the last six months or so, with Yahoo! doing its best to offer up a viable alternative. Now it's the turn of Microsoft to have a go at toppling Google from its long held leading position. Microsoft has spent two years completely overhauling the MSN Search engine and is currently beta testing the results of its work at **http://beta.search.msn.co.uk**. It has dramatically increased the number of locations searched to over five billion webpages. Microsoft's intention was for this to be more pages than any other internet search engine, although shortly after Microsoft unveiled the beta site, Google responded by upping its index to over 8 billion pages. Oh well, it was worth a try!

One of the unique features of MSN Search is that it not only searches the Net, but also consults Encarta for search queries, too. It also accepts conventionally formed questions, making it easier for novice users to familiarise themselves with Web searches. Like Google, it now has separate categories for grouping together news stories and images, allowing you to quickly find these in the search results. Also new to the search engine is something called a Search Builder. This gives you more control over the search – you can specify the country, region or language or restrict the search to a specific site or domain. It is even possible to emphasise or de-emphasise search criteria in the search results to help you find the most useful results.



Move the sliders to refine the search results

Castle of the Net

Ban comic sans

You may think there are more pressing concerns in the world than the quality of a typeface, but try telling that to the people running **www.bancomic sans.com**. They've started a campaign to "ensure future generations will never suffer the scourge that is the plague of our time". The scourge is, of course, the Comic Sans typeface. While you may share a dislike of the font, you will almost certainly be surprised by the degree to which those running the website hate Comic Sans. According to their manifesto, Comic Sans apparently "conveys silliness, childish naivete and irreverence". To find out more about the campaign, and to purchase some Anti-Comic Sans propaganda head over to the Ban Comic Sans website.

Educate your baby from birth to fight against to scourge of Comic Sans

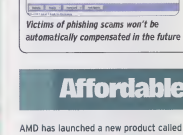
Save Bernd

A photographer called Chris Krohn found a cute rabbit a few months ago and named him Bernd. He's very healthy, yet he still faces the distinct possibility of ending up dead before the New Year. In a twisted bid to raise money for charity (and a little for himself) Chris has decided to ransom Bernd for €1 million. Unless Chris receives the full amount by 31 December, Bernd will be killed and eaten for New Year's Eve Dinner. Towards the end of November Chris had only received €55,497, so things aren't looking particularly good for the bunny. Whatever happens, at least 80% of the donations received will be given to charity and Chris will keep the rest. To help save Bernd's life, you can either donate cash directly into Chris's bank account or purchase Save Bernd! merchandise including T-shirts and mugs from **www.krohm.net/bernd2.htm**

No compensation

The major high-street banks have indicated they are unlikely to continue offering automatic compensation to victims of phishing scams. More than £4.5 million has already been paid out in refunds to those who have been tricked into supplying their online banking details to fraudsters. However, banks aren't insured against losses from such scams and aren't prepared to continue automatically dishing out such hefty sums.

Some incidences of phishing are very sophisticated and even experienced computer users are in danger of falling into the trap, but others stem from emails riddled with spelling mistakes and grammar errors. It seems increasingly likely that banks will assess compensation claims resulting from Internet fraud on a case-by-case basis, and anyone falling for a less than sophisticated scam may well be left out of pocket. HBOS, Lloyds TSB and The Royal Bank of Scotland have all said they will begin looking at each claim individually and won't necessarily refund all victims.



Victims of phishing scams won't be automatically compensated in the future

http://www.

www.banksafeonline.org.uk
The UK banking industry's website designed to help you avoid internet fraud

Affordable micro devices

AMD has launched a new product called the Personal Internet Communicator, which is designed to make it easy for those who don't currently own computers to get online. It's intended to be sold in developing countries, and will be much more affordable than conventional desktop PCs.

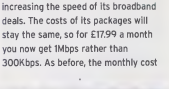
Essentially it's a small, Windows CE-based computer in a rugged plastic case. It has a small AMD Geode GX500 processor, 128MB RAM, a 10GB hard drive and four USB sockets. It comes with a mouse and keyboard (to plug into two of those sockets) and a 15in monitor.

http://www.

www.amd.com/us-en/Weblets/0,,7832_12095,00.html
For more details on AMD's Personal Internet Communicator

NTL doubles speed

NTL is seeing in the New Year by increasing the speed of its broadband deals. The costs of its packages will stay the same, so for £17.99 a month you now get 1Mbps rather than 300Kbps. As before, the monthly cost includes the rental of a broadband modem and there is no setup fee charged. It also now offers 2Mbps for £24.99 a month and top-of-the-range 3Mbps access for £37.99 a month. While these new deals are open to new customers, existing NTL customers will have to pay an administration fee of £25 to upgrade to the faster services. It's almost certain other leading broadband providers will follow suit with similar product changes so they aren't left behind by NTL.



NTL is doubling the speed of its broadband packages

http://www.

www.ntl.com
To sign up to the NTL's new broadband services

Corel buys Jasc

Corel is famous for its high-end graphics products designed for the business graphics market, but is less well known to many home PC users. All this is set to change, though, as Corel has just purchased Jasc, the maker of Paint Shop Pro. This gives the company a user base of over 60 million customers, and the necessary products to offer everything from basic entry level software to advanced graphics creation packages. Paint Shop Pro will continue to be developed with Corel supporting new research and development initiatives.

COREL™
Jasc Software

http://www.

www.corel.com
For more about Corel and its range of graphics products

Every little helps

This month's new music download service comes from the supermarket giant Tesco. It isn't attempting to beat iTunes in terms of cost (songs cost the same price of 79p each) but is encoding tunes at a higher quality audio rate of 192Kbps. They are also in .wma format to enable playback in Windows Media Player. The site already has a database of over 500,000 tunes and Clubcard holders will be pleased to know they earn extra points for every tune they download.

Tesco.com is the latest in the long list of legal music download services

http://www.

www.tescodownloads.com
To download music from Tesco.com

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TOP 40

The .mp3 format is one of the digital success stories of the past decade. Whilst the average person on the street might not be able to tell you what a .wav file is or who their member of parliament is, it's likely that many of them will know that 'MP3' is something to do with music. The reverse is also true, as music is becoming more and more about .mp3s. Thanks to the success of legal music download sites and advanced mobile phones that support the format, .mp3s now have their own slice of the singles chart, and are fast replacing CDs as the most popular singles format.

For all the iPods and digital audio-playing toasters in the world, the PC desktop is still the best place to be when it comes to .mp3s. Why, you may ask? Because of the massive number and range of programs making use of this compact yet appealing format, that's why. In this article we run down our pick of 40 of the best .mp3 tools available, and explain why you shouldn't be without these fantastic audio aids a moment longer.

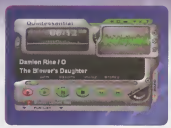
Luke Whittaker

Media players

It's impossible to cover .mp3-related software without mentioning Winamp – one of the few programs to have emerged at the beginning of the digital music revolution and stayed the course. Though its long-term future may now be in jeopardy (see our lead news story on page 8), Winamp is still an excellent tool and one that deserves a place on the system of music fans everywhere.

Winamp 2 was long considered the best media player available and is still dearly loved by many – just as version 3 has been widely derided. It's version 5 that we've picked out for this round-up though, as this latest version of the software brings together all of the best aspects of Winamp 2 with a generous helping of new features. It's now possible to tune into Internet radio and TV channels using the program and you can at last burn audio CDs without firing up another application (see our guide opposite for more details).

AV MP3 Player – Morpher lets you add a range of audio effects to tracks in real time



Quintessential Player is a great looking alternative to Winamp or Windows Media Player

If you're looking for an eye-catching digital audio player, you could do a lot worse than try iTunes – the Apple media player that's made a big impact on the PC world. As well as cataloguing and playing your audio files, iTunes provides easy access to a wide range of online radio stations. Like Winamp 5, iTunes enables you to create audio CDs from tracks stored on your computer.

One of the biggest selling points of iTunes, of course, is its links to Apple's iTunes Music Store, which lets you purchase and download music tracks. The European store has over 700,000 tracks on offer from hundreds of well-known artists, and downloads start from just 79p each.

iTunes offers a fresh, clean interface that comes as a welcome alternative to Media Player

HOTTEST MP3 TOOLS

Enhance your digital audio experience with the best selection of media players, converters, editors and DJ tools available

Whilst the likes of iTunes and Winamp enable you to set up playlists, their random play facilities are relatively limited. You can choose to play tracks by genre or rating, but wouldn't it be better if you could play tunes to suit your mood? That's the idea behind MoodAmp – an intelligent media player, which enables you to categorise songs by mood. Once all your tracks are suitably categorised, you can in future choose your mood – Relaxed, Angry, Romantic etc – and MoodAmp will provide you with a suitable soundtrack.

If you're looking for a media player with a good selection of added extras, then look no further than AV MP3 Player – Morpher. In addition to handling all of the most common audio file formats, this powerful tool provides access to a bewildering array of audio effects, which can be applied to tracks in real time. These range from tools to enhance the drum beats in your tunes, to a Cher Modulation plug-in for adding distorted effects to your vocals.

AbilityMP3 is another interesting freeware media player that has much more to offer than your average .mp3 jukebox. It features support for skins, multiple customisable playlists and uses the online CDDB for grabbing artist and song details when playing audio CDs. The player features a sleek interface and it is possible to control playback using voice commands!

A more polished alternative comes in the form of Quintessential Player (QCD, which offers many features that the leading tools don't. For starters, it comes with an audio cleaning function built-in enabling users to edit single tracks or whole groups of files from the main interface. Like Winamp, QCD supports a wide range of plug-ins, including visualisations, input plug-ins and encoding tools. These help to extend the functionality of the program

Play .mp3 files according to your mood with the help of MoodAmp

Burn an audio CD in Winamp 5

step 1 *To burn a CD you'll need to grab a blank CD-R and gather your .mp3 files. Open Winamp and then open the Media Library (either click the ML button on the main interface or go to View/ Media Library). Click the Add button and select Files. Now add your tracks to the disc.*

step 2 *You'll see the track listing in the library window. If you're happy with the selection, click Burn. Unless you have Winamp Pro, which supports up to 48x burning speeds, you'll only be able to burn at a maximum of 2x regardless of your CD burner specs.*

step 3 *Winamp will first prepare each track and will then continue with the process automatically. The advantage of Winamp's setup is that it eliminates the need for manual encoding – the program automatically encodes the tracks into the .wav CD audio format.*

You will hear the tunes you know

Synapse Media Player is an unusual tool for playing your .mp3 files. What makes Synapse stand out from other media players is the technology it uses for learning your music tastes, known as The Brain. According to the program's developer the more you use Synapse, the more The Brain learns about the way you listen to your music. For example, if you never play one rock song followed by another, Synapse won't do this either. If you like the intelligent playlisting functions but dislike the rather Spartan media player, you can also download The Brain as a plug-in for Winamp 2.x.

Apparently, Synapse's central intelligence can learn to playlist music as you would yourself

still and allow such things as the playing of .mp4 audio files – the type used by some mobile phones.

Why limit .mp3 playback to just your media players though? With Outlook Mp3 Player you can use .mp3 files (in addition to videos and documents) as reminder alarms in Outlook.

DJ tools

For many people, simply listening to music isn't active enough – they want to get their hands dirty and create their own mixes. There's an ample selection of DJ tools available to help you do this and here are a few of the best freeware options.

Acoustica MP3 Audio Mixer is a useful tool if you want to create DJ-style mix CDs from your digital audio collection. By using the program's multi-track timeline, you can blend different tracks together to create one seamless mix.

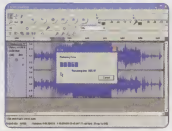
Once you've created a seamless .wav or .mp3 file, all you need to do is burn this on to CD and listen to it at your leisure.

If you prefer to mix tracks in real time, then you need the services of a twin-deck .mp3 player like KraMixer DJ Software. The program enables you to queue up a track in each deck and use crossfading and beat matching facilities to mix them together. You can also apply effects to your tracks including echo and reverb. Although it takes some practice before you can create professional quality mixes, once you've got the hang of it you can record your mixes to CD and listen back to them at your leisure.

If you find KraMixer a little intimidating, MP3 Tunes might be a simpler place to start your DJ career. The program has far fewer options, but it's still possible to fade between decks and cue up the next file.

Acoustica MP3 Audio Mixer is a great means of creating seamless mixes from existing .mp3s

If you want to mix .mp3 tracks like a professional DJ, you need KraMixer DJ Software



Audacity can be used to edit existing tracks or record audio from external sources

Audio editors

Whether you want to trim out the dead air at the start and end of your files, add unusual effects to audio tracks, or start creating your own music from samples, you'll need a good audio editor to get you started. The good news is you're spoilt for choice

Audacity is a versatile sound editor, which enables you to perform various actions on audio files, such as noise reduction and sound cleaning. The program can also be used to add effects to full audio tracks or selected sections. The effects on offer include the likes of echo, fade and reverb, and can help give an added dimension to your own tracks or tunes in your .mp3 collection.

If all you want to do is split .mp3 files – to remove the long gap between the last song on an album and the secret track, for example – it's much easier to use Mega MP3 Splitter. The tool is very simple to use – just load up your .mp3 file and add tags wherever you want to specify track breaks. Optionally, you could also try mp3DirectCut, which works in a similar way.

MP3 Butcher is more advanced tool

Pulse Master is an unusual tool for altering the pitch and temp of audio files

Mega MP3 Splitter is a simple tool for cutting your audio tracks down to size

> "If you make a lot of compilations albums, this can be a very useful tool and enables you to blend tracks seamlessly into each other"

for hacking sections from your digital audio files. In addition to trimming your tracks, the program can also be used to join multiple sections together to create mixes. The start and end of audio snippets can be faded in and out to keep your mixes flowing seamlessly.

MP3 Workshop XP is a little different, as it offers a wide range of tools in one application. You can use it to manage and play your music files, burn audio tracks onto CDs, and edit ID3 tag information. On the editing side of things, you can use the facility to merge files together. This will create a sort of musical montage that you can save and then do with as you will. If you make a lot of compilations albums, this can be a very useful tool and enables you to blend tracks seamlessly into each other.

Pulse Master is another specialised audio editing tool devised with a very specific remit – to enable you users to alter the pitch and tempo of any given tune. This shareware tool operates in real time yet it's still possible to save out the results of your audio tweaks. The program's makers suggest some unusual uses for the program, including creating a looping track that increases in tempo as an accompaniment for your more intimate moments.

The album charts

When you convert your CD collection to .mp3 tracks, they're generally saved as separate tracks rather than a single album. This is fine if you want to listen to tracks at random, but if you prefer to keep albums together as a whole, what can you do? The answer comes in the form of MakeItOne MP3 Album Maker. This specialised audio editor is designed to take a collection of .mp3 files and stitch them together into a single album file, which can be played in any .mp3 player. The good news is you can also use the program to split your albums back into their component .mp3s at any time

i-Sound MP3 Recorder is an attractive tool for recording audio from any source

Recording tools

i-Sound MP3 Recorder can be used to transform your PC into a complete audio recording studio. The program can capture sound from virtually any internal or external source, so you could use it to digitise your LP collection, with the right connectors, or record streaming audio. It's possible to record directly to .mp3, .ogg, .wma or .wav format, and it couldn't be easier to use.

If you enjoy listening to streaming audio from the likes of SHOUTcast radio stations, StationRipper is one tool you shouldn't be without. This handy tool is capable of recording audio from streaming radio stations as distinct .mp3 tracks on your hard drive. If you leave the program running, you needn't worry that it will fill up your disk space with tracks unnecessarily – the program keeps track of all files recorded in an effort to avoid capturing duplicates.

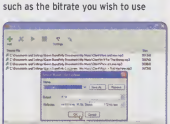
Radiator is one of the oldest programs in our top 40, but that doesn't make it any less useful – if you have a radio card or USB radio device. The program enables you to record directly from such devices to .mp3 or .wma, and can be controlled either via point and click or from the command line.

File converters

Whilst most audio conversion tools sport a complex interface bursting with options, Right-Click MP3 keep things as simple as possible. After installing the program, simply right-click on a.wav file and select the Encode option to convert it to an .mp3. Converseley, right-click an .mp3 file and select Decode to create a .wav file. All of the program's settings – such as the bitrate you wish to use when encoding – can be accessed via the Start menu.

Switch Sound Format Converter is another useful tool for converting audio tracks of different formats to .mp3 or .wav. The program supports a variety of formats, including Apple's .aac format, which is often used when ripping CDs in iTunes. You can set what bitrate to use when encoding files, and also which codec you would like to use.

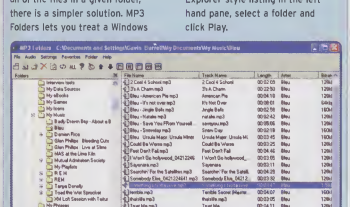
Record tracks played on SHOUTcast radio stations with StationRipper



Switch is a useful tool for converting batches of files to .mp3 or .wav format

Click and go

Creating playlists is the standard way of setting up a group of files to play, but if you simply want to play all of the files in a given folder, there is a simpler solution. MP3 Folders lets you treat a Windows folder as a playlist, so all you need to do in order to play your files is browse through the Windows Explorer-style listing in the left-hand pane, select a folder and click Play.

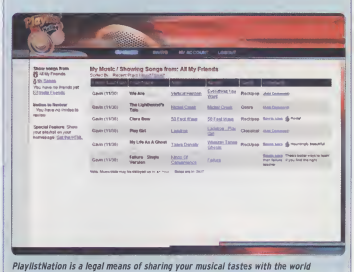


Simply browse to the folder containing your audio files and click Play

MP3 sharing – the legal way

Plenty of tools enable you to share .mp3 files across the Internet, but sharing files in this way is almost always in breach of copyright and therefore illegal..With PlaylistNation, you can share the .mp3s you're listening to with friends and family across the globe without fear of incurring the wrath of the authorities. That's because the program doesn't share your music but rather your playlist.

The program installs as a client that sits in your System Tray and sends details about the music you're listening to through your internet connection to a special website. All you need do is send the link to your playlist to other PlaylistNation users and they can view what you're listening to. Only users you invite personally can view your list, so you're safe in the knowledge that you're not broadcasting your embarrassing taste to the world.



PlaylistNation is a legal means of sharing your musical tastes with the world

CD rippers

There are many tools you can use to rip CD tracks to .mp3s – including some media players, such as iTunes – but you won't go far wrong with the dedicated ripping tool, Audiograbber. The program can be set to use one of a variety of .mp3 or .wma encoders, and will check your files to ensure they exactly match your original tracks, minimising the likelihood of errors. It will also automatically retrieve details from freedb (**www.freedb.org**) – one of the many online repositories for audio CD track and artist information – so you don't need to label tracks manually.

CD to MP3 Freeware does much the same job as Audiograbber, converting CD tracks into .mp3s. As an added bonus, you can normalise your tracks as you record them to ensure sound levels remain comparable between tracks.

If your audio CDs are scratched or dirty then you may have difficulty converting their contents into digital format. In these cases, Easy CD-DA Extractor may be able to help. The program features advanced sound processing capabilities, which its maker claimed are able to overcome minor damage on audio discs. Other than this useful option, Easy CD-DA Extractor features similar options to other CD rippers, though it's shareware rather than freeware.

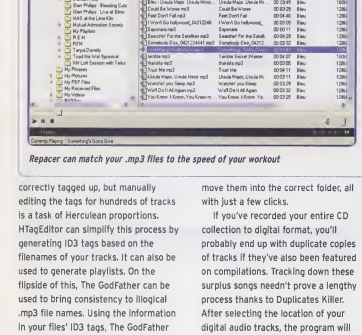
Music management

Organising and playing your audio tracks is much easier if they're

> "The program features advanced sound processing capabilities, which its makers claim are able to overcome minor damage on audio discs"

Gonna make you sweat

Whilst most of the .mp3-related tools available are aimed at a broad market, others have a much more specific audience in mind. Take Repacer, for example. This very specific audio editor is designed to adjust the tempo of music to perfectly match the pace of your workout. The pitch of your tunes remains unchanged, so you can still enjoy the original recording, but without worrying about it putting you off your stride when jogging.



Repacer can match your .mp3 files to the speed of your workout

correctly tagged up, but manually editing the tags for hundreds of tracks is a task of Herculean proportions. HTagEditor can simplify this process by generating ID3 tags based on the filenames of your tracks. It can also be used to generate playlists. On the flipside of this, The GodFather can be used to bring consistency to illogical .mp3 file names. Using the information in your files' ID3 tags, The GodFather can suggest new names for you. All you need do is picked the files you wish to change and apply the changes. If you need a more general tool for editing ID3 tags, Media Tagger is well worth a look.

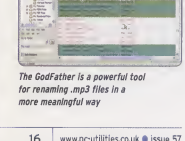
If you've got a careful system of folders set up to organise your .mp3 tracks, you may find it awkward getting new files into the right places. Fast MIS – the Fast Mp3 Integration System – can help you to integrate new downloaded .mp3s into your collection quickly and accurately. Using information from your new audio files' ID3 tags, the program will rename the files accordingly and move them into the correct folder, all with just a few clicks.

If you've recorded your entire CD collection to digital format, you'll probably end up with duplicate copies of tracks if they've also been featured on compilations. Tracking down these surplus songs needn't prove a lengthy process thanks to Duplicates Killer. After selecting the location of your digital audio tracks, the program will compile a database of all your files. You can then search this database to locate files with matching properties, such as file size or the name of the song, based on ID3 tag information.

After building up a huge collection of .mp3 files you might find yourself running out of disk space. A solution to this problem is to back up the files you don't listen to as often to disc, however, you're then faced with the problem of remembering on which disc a given .mp3 is stored. MP3 Librarian makes this a simple task by cataloguing your disc-based .mp3 collection. If you've got a CD player that accepts .mp3 files, this is a must.

If your PC is connected to other systems across a network, SiTeX MP3-Finder may prove a useful tool for tracking down audio files. The program can search all accessible folders across a LAN for .mp3 tracks, and can be set to locate only those files containing certain information in their ID3 tags, such as a given artist or song title.

If you need to find out how a particular .mp3 track was encoded, you can use the services of GSpot. Although more useful as a tool for identifying the codecs required to play .avi files, it can also handle audio tracks with ease.



The GodFather is a powerful tool for renaming .mp3 files in a more meaningful way

And the beat goes on...

Many .mp3 players enable you to view album artwork relating to the track you're playing. To make use of this feature, you'll normally need to have the relevant images downloaded to the corresponding folder on your system. Why spend time locating and downloading these images yourself though, when you can get MA3D (Mp3 Amazon Album Artwork Downloader) to do all the hard work for you? This simple program makes use of Amazon's search interface to retrieve thumbnail images of album cover art. MA3D uses details from your .mp3 files' ID3 tags to identify the relevant artwork and takes care of the whole process automatically.

The larger your .mp3 collection gets, the more likely you are to find that some .mp3s will be louder than others. MP3Gain can solve this problem by normalising the sound level across all your .mp3s. Rather than simply looking at the loudest (peak) points in the file, as many normalising programs do, it attempts to intelligently work out how loud the file sounds to the human ear, and makes changes accordingly.

If you broadcast your own local radio station then you're sure to find SonIcart a useful addition to your audio toolkit. The program is described as a jingle encoding, scheduling and playback system" and effectively inserts random, customised jingles between your audio files at user-specified intervals. Whether these are adverts for your own programmes or sponsored links that help to finance the station, being able to control them from a central interface will prove a godsend.

Info

Program	Price	Website
Winamp 5	Free	www.winamp.com
iTunes	Free	www.apple.com/uk/itunes
MoodAmp	Free	www.moodamp.com
AV MP3 Player - Morpher	Free	http://mp3-player.audio4fun.com
AbilityMP3	Free	www.talkingdesktop.com
Quintessential Player	Free	www.quinnware.com
Outlook Mp3 Player	Free	http://brigsoft.com
Synapse Media Player	Free	www.synapseal.com
Acoustica MP3 Audio Mixer	US$24.95	www.acoustica.com
KraMixer DJ Software	Free	www.kramware.com
MP3 Tunes	Free	http://tunesplayer.com/
Audacity	Free	http://audacity.sourceforge.net
Mega MP3 Splitter	Free	http://digilander.libero.it/mega27/megasoft.htm
mp3DirectCut	Free	www.mpesch3.del.cc
MP3 Butcher	Free	www.smart.iconter.pl/mp3/butcher/
MP3 Workshop XP	US$32.95	www.audio2x.com
Pulse Master	US$29.9D	www.pianosoft-europe.com
MakeitDne MP3 Album Maker	Free	www.konnaris.co.uk
i-Sound MP3 Recorder	US$29.95	www.abyssmedia.com
StationRipper	Free	www.stationripper.com
Radiator	Free	http://flesko.cz/
Right-Click MP3	Free	http://my.execpc.com/~sfritz/rc-mp3/
Switch Sound Format Converter	Free	www.nch.com.au/switch/
Audiograbber	Free	www.audiograbber.com-us.ne
CD to MP3 Freeware	Free	www.exusing.com
Easy CD-DA Extractor	US$29.95	www.poikosoft.com
HTagEditor	Free	www.htageditor.de
The GodFather	Free	http://users.otenet.gr/~jtcliner/ti/t/
Media Tagger	Free	www.voiny.cz/media-tagger/eng/
Fast MIS	Free	http://slxdots.de
Duplicates Killer	Free	www.nzk.it/~soft/
MP3 Librarian	Free	n/a
SiTeX MP3-Finder	Free	www.sitex.com.ua
GSpot	Free	www.headbands.com/gspot/
MP3 Folders	Free	www.mllpoint.com
MA3D	Free	www.s3oftware.com
MP3Gain	Free	http://mp3gain.sourceforge.net/
Sonicart	Free	www.babyfishmouth.co.uk
PlaylistNation	Free	www.playlistnation.com
Repacer	US$24.9S	www.optimistec.com

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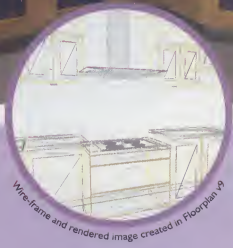

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THE COMPLETE INTERNET PROTECTION TOOLKIT

Don't just rely on an antivirus program and firewall to keep you safe when on the Net – protect against every possible attack and ensure your peace of mind

The days when antivirus software and a personal firewall were all you needed to protect your PC while online are well and truly over. A high proportion of worms and Trojans now use advanced techniques, which are capable of disabling antivirus programs and firewalls to pursue their malicious invasion.

Microsoft continually faces criticism for releasing bug-ridden software with critical security flaws. In hindsight, though, how can they be blamed for exploits that have occurred as a result of not updating Windows? Two extremely destructive worms that wreaked havoc were Sasser and MSBlaster. The devastating consequences could have been prevented had users kept their systems updated with critical patches released by Microsoft.

In recent years, spyware has increased dramatically and has now become a much larger threat than viruses. More worryingly is that in a recent Web@Work survey carried out by Harris Interactive (**www.websense.com/Web@Work/2004/**, it reported a massive 92% of companies have been infected by spyware at some point. The report also indicated that only 29% of network administrators are aware of the consequences. Initially, spyware was bundled with shareware and freeware utilities, but now it can be installed by visiting a website containing malicious code, which helps to explain its ever-increasing prevalence.

Over the last 18 months, browser hijacking has escalated to uncontrollable levels, where users are redirected to undesirable sites containing adult content. The worst culprit has to be the CoolWeb Search, which to date has over 1,000 variants. Not only does this strain cleverly evade detection, but also disables dedicated removal tools and blocks legitimate help resources via a loopback in the Hosts file.

If that's not enough, the latest trend is feisty companies using dirty tactics and scams to con users into downloading their software. The majority are stolen code from legitimate programs such as Ad-Aware and Spybot - Search & Destroy. The lesson to be learned is to only download software from respected trustworthy sources and visit **www.spywarewarrior.com/rogue_anti-spyware.htm** before installing any software purporting to remove spyware.

While we can't guarantee our Complete Internet Protection Toolkit will offer protect you against all future invasions, provided you're sensible and have layered security plus the latest Microsoft updates, there's little chance of those critters infesting your system. On a final note, don't forget the old adage "prevention is better than cure".

Caroline Lyons

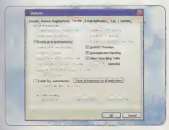
Windows XP users can configure automatic updates of Microsoft critical updates, to prevent vulnerabilities being exploited

A high proportion of the current Windows vulnerabilities enable remote code execution via open ports, giving them the opportunity to elevate access rights. To reduce the risk of this threat, block UDP ports 135, 137, 138, 445 and TCP ports 135, 139, 445, 593 and inbound traffic on ports greater than 1024. To do this with Sygate Personal Firewall, right-click the Sygate System Tray Icon and select Advanced Rules. In the General tab enter a brief description for your rule and click Block this traffic. Switch to the Ports and Protocols tab and select the required Protocol and type the port numbers in the Remote and Local fields.

Personal firewall

A firewall sits between your PC and the Internet, blocking any unwanted traffic. Windows XP has a built-in firewall, but the original version only blocks inbound traffic and provides no defence against outbound traffic. The Windows Firewall program incorporated in Windows XP Service Pack 2 offers a slightly better level of protection and is enabled by default. However, a standalone firewall is the recommended approach, and preferably one that includes NetBIOS and anti-application hijacking. Sygate Personal Firewall is an excellent choice for home users and offers advanced configuration and rule filtering.

If you're running a vanilla installation of Windows XP without any Service Packs, don't even consider going online until you have a firewall installed as it will offer a minimal level of protection while obtaining critical updates.



Sygate Personal Firewall is an award winning freeware firewall that includes NetBIOS and Anti-Application Hijacking features

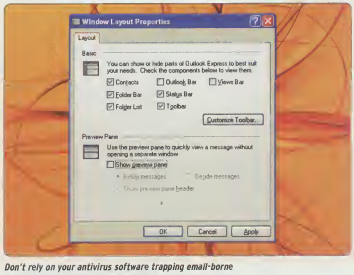
Antivirus

Antivirus software is only dependable if it uses the latest definitions. Even big contenders like Norton and McAfee are much less effective if they haven't been updated, as outdated definitions won't trap the latest virus outbreaks. When choosing software, ensure it offers heuristic scanning as this technique

AVG's built-in Personal Email Scanner supports SMTP and POP3 email account, monitoring your inbox for viral activity

monitors file behaviour, rather than purely relying on definition file interrogation. Grisoft has just released AVG Anti-Virus 7 Free Edition, which boasts an improved scanning engine and advanced detection techniques. The most welcome addition is the auto-update feature that automatically executes the update manager when the user is next online. The updates are now categorised as priority, recommended and optional downloads.

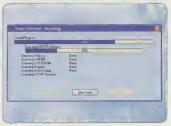
Some viruses propagate when users simply preview an infected email in Outlook Express or by accepting HTML email that could potentially contain hidden malicious code that executes the virus. To disable the Preview pane, click View/ Layout and uncheck Show preview pane. Outlook Express 6 is configured by default to disable attachments that could potentially be a virus. Windows XP Service Pack 2 users have the additional benefit of images in HTML email being blocked. Click Tools/ Options/ Read and uncheck Mark messages as read after displaying for x seconds and check Read all messages in plain text.



Don't rely on your antivirus software trapping email-borne worms – disable the preview pane to prevent propagation

Anti-Trojan

A Trojan horse is a destructive malicious code that usually masquerades as a legitimate Windows file. They can also easily bypass or disable antivirus software as part of their payload. Trojan Remover targets over 12,000 known Trojans and monitors your system in real-time. It runs a scan at startup to detect malicious activity and changes to system files.



Trojan Remover scans Windows core components for the presence of Trojans and also removes registry entries

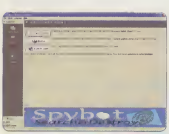
As an extra means of defence, install RegistryProt to monitor the Run folders in the registry

> "A Trojan horse is a destructive malicious code that usually masquerades as a legitimate Windows file"

RegistryProt can be a lifesaver in the event of a Trojan disabling other security software. Once installed, run RegistryProt Admin and click Install and Start and accept existing legitimate startup programs. Once running, if a program attempts to run at startup, it will prompt to accept or decline the entry.

Anti-spyware

Spyware is normally a program or malicious code that spies on your surfing habits for advertising purposes. These insidious tools use various methods to infiltrate your system, either via malicious script or bundled with freeware and shareware. It's important to read the End User Licence Agreement (EULA) during installation of any program to prevent unwanted



Spybot scans your hard drive and registry for the presence of spyware, diallers and browser hijacking

Check the statistics in SpyBlocker every few days, for a surprising insight into the trash it's blocking

For a small US$5 fee, you can install Auto-Update to ensure you always have the latest protection in SpywareBlaster

SpywareGuard replaces Javacool's Browser Hijack Blaster, to prevent browser hijackers changing your settings

modules being installed.

SpyBlocker provides the ultimate defence against spyware as it monitors port 80 (HTTP) in real-time, protecting against spyware, advertising cookies, Web bugs and ActiveX controls. It proved its weight in gold during the outbreak of the Code Red and Nimda worms.

SpywareBlaster changes the kill bit in the Windows registry to protect against malicious ActiveX controls, browser hijackers and diallers. It currently blocks over 3,000 items, including approximately 1,200 CoolWeb Search variants. Its database uses the CLSID of the ActiveX control or Browser Helper Object (BHO) to identify malicious components. Once installed, click Updates to download the latest database then press Enable all protection.

SpywareGuard is the ideal companion to SpywareBlaster as it uses a real-time scanning engine to stop spyware in its tracks, supporting .exe and .cab files. It also protects against malicious downloads and browser hijacks.

IE-Spyad is a registry file that adds a list of known advertising and spyware servers to the Restricted Sites Zone in Internet Explorer. Double-click install.bat and press 2 to install IE-Spyad. On the next screen, press 1 to install, press any key to continue then 2 to exit. Use the same .bat file to remove previous information before updating with the latest block list.

Spybot – Search & Destroy is primarily a spyware removal utility but also includes dedicated security tools. The Immunize feature uses the same method of defence as SpywareBlaster. To protect against bad products, click the Immunize button for permanent immunity. If you're running Internet Explorer, you should also enable the Browser Helper to block bad downloads.

Power tip

Messenger spam is a relatively recent trend, whereby spammers abuse the Windows Messenger service installed on Windows XP systems. The purpose of the service is to provide an easy means to communicate directly with other users over a network. Unfortunately, spammers are exploiting this service to compromise your security by sending undesirable requests via a pop-up message to chat with a raunchy female. To disable the service, click Start/ Settings/ Control Panel/ Administrative Tools/ Services. Right-click Messenger, select Properties and press the Stop button. Select Disable from the Startup type drop-down menu. You should also block ports 135-139 with your firewall. If you have Service Pack 2 installed, Messenger should be blocked by default.

Anti-diallers

Some anti-spyware tools offer protection against diallers. Diallers work by masking themselves as your default connection, using a premium rate telephone number. Typically, the first time a user is alerted is when a massive telephone bill arrives on the doormat. For maximum control against these malicious tools, you should install a dedicated dialler blocker such as StopITNow.

Ultimate lockdown

While Microsoft attempts to keep abreast of vulnerabilities, some can go undetected. Luckily, security professionals have made their patches readily available, to complement other security software, maximising protection. Below is our list of the security tools no Windows user should be without:

DSO Stop: This tool can detect whether DSO (Data Source Object) exploits exist in Internet Explorer. If so, click Protect Internet Explorer to patch the registry and prevent these vulnerabilities from being exploited.

SockLock: SockLock fools Trojans and worms into believing your Winsock has already been compromised, thus preventing them from breaching your system themselves.

HTA Stop: This tool blocks malicious HyperText Applications (HTAs) from running scripts. Simply execute the program and click Block HTA Apps to enable protection. Some Windows XP and 2000 Control Panel applets use this form of scripting and some loss of functionality may be experienced.

WNetEnumCachedPasswords Lock Patch: Trojans with a password-stealing payload call upon mpr.dll to reveal users' passwords. This patch prevents this file from disclosing password information on Windows 98/Me systems. The .dll has already been patched in Windows XP and therefore doesn't need applying.

WSH Anti-Polymorphism Patch: Windows Scripting Host is installed in all versions of Windows and is seen as a security threat. This patch prevents VBScript and JavaScript from calling on read-write functions on Windows 98/Me systems. If you use scripts regularly, it's not advisable to apply this patch.

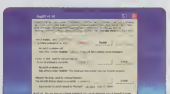
Bug Off: Bug Off patches Windows XP vulnerabilities, but should be used with caution as some features can prevent Windows from functioning correctly.

XP Antispy: XP Antispy has a user-friendly interface to tweak Windows XP settings to disable some of its features calling home. These include disabling MSN Messenger, Internet clock synchronisation, UPnP service and automatic Media Player codec download.

DCOMbobulator: DCOMbobulator checks your system for the DCOM vulnerability exploited by worms and Trojans and scans the known ports to determine if they're open.

DSO Stop checks whether the Data Source Object (DSO) Exploit exists in your browser

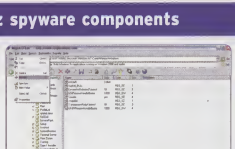
SockLock creates two 72K files, which prevent SKA class Trojans from ever being installed on your PC



Run Bug Off to disable known vulnerabilities used by hijackers that haven't been patched by Microsoft

Remove GreatSearch.Biz spyware components

step 1 *Start Registry Editor and navigate to Navigate to HKEY_LOCAL_MACHINE\SOFTWARE\Microsoft\Windows\CurrentVersion\ShellServiceObjectDelayLoad. If there's a System entry in the right-hand pane, delete the value. Restart the computer, and delete system32.dll from the c:\Windows\system32 folder.*



step 2 *Run Registrar Lite and type HKEY_LOCAL_MACHINE\SOFTWARE\Microsoft\Windows NT\CurrentVersion\Windows\AppInit_DLLs into the Address Bar. Make a note of the malicious .dll. Right-click the Windows folder and rename Windowsold. Delete the .dll then right-click Windowsold and rename it 'Windows'.*

step 3 *Install KillBox from the coverdisc. Launch the program and type the full path and name of the .dll revealed in the AppInit_DLL value in Step 2. Click Menu/ Select Action/ Delete on Reboot and restart the computer. Finally run CoolWeb Shredder and Ad-Aware to eliminate any remaining malicious files.*

Anti-spam

Despite new anti-spam legislation in certain countries, and ISPs introducing anti-spam software at source, junk email continues to be the bane of our lives. Anyone with an active email address is at risk.

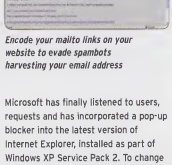
The majority of email addresses targeted by spammers are harvested by spambots. These are robots that scour the Internet for email addresses to add to their database. The most serious new trend is known as phishing, where email appears to come from a legitimate source, typically a bank. These emails ask the recipient for personal financial information, but because they appear to be from valid email addresses, they often bypass anti-spam software.

Mailwasher is an anti-spam application that interrogates your POP3 server using advanced filters to remove spam before it arrives in your inbox. The free version is ad-supported and only supports one email address, and doesn't include Hotmail. Mailwasher Pro supports multiple email accounts, including Hotmail and can also be synchronised with SpamCop at **www.spamcop.net** to automatically report spammers to their ISP.

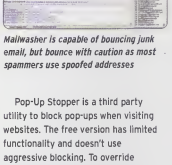
MailFrontier Desktop is one of very few anti-spam applications that detect the new phishing scams. It also includes Response Challenges where you can send questionable senders a challenge that can't be read by spambots. This method proves the legitimacy of an email, and certainly offers more accuracy when setting up filters.

Pop-up blockers

Disabling the Messenger service won't prevent pop-ups displaying on websites. Pop-ups are generally advertising, but some can contain malicious script, better known as drive-by downloads.



Encode your mailto links on your website to evade spambots harvesting your email address

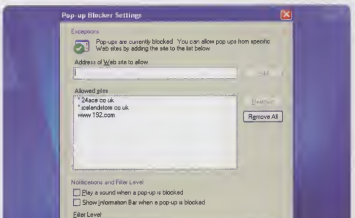


Mailwasher is capable of bouncing junk email, but bounce with caution as most spammers use spoofed addresses

Microsoft has finally listened to users, requests and has incorporated a pop-up blocker into the latest version of Internet Explorer, installed as part of Windows XP Service Pack 2. To change the settings and control the level of protection required, click Tools/ Pop-up Blocker/ Pop-up Blocker Settings. It's recommended to set the filter level to High. When this setting is enabled, all pop-ups are inhibited and the Ctrl button needs to be pressed to override the feature.

Pop-Up Stopper is a third party utility to block pop-ups when visiting websites. The free version has limited functionality and doesn't use aggressive blocking. To override blocking, you need to press Shift to allow normal pop-ups and Ctrl to override Java pop-ups.

The Google Toolbar incorporates a built-in pop-up blocker that's enabled by default. During installation select Standard Features, as the Advanced Features monitor your surfing habits.



If you have disabled the Information Bar, keep a close eye on the Status Bar for pop-up activity

Removal tools

You're spoilt for choice when on the hunt for spyware removal tools, but it's imperative you only use trusted applications downloaded from legitimate websites. In our opinion, the only ones you'll ever really need are Spybot – Search & Destroy and Ad-Aware SE Personal Edition. If it's a virus infection you need to remove, antivirus software vendors provide dedicated removal tools on their websites to clean worms and viruses that can't be cleaned in the normal way.

Ad-Aware SE Personal Edition accurately detects some of the sophisticated browser hijackers that exploit Windows vulnerabilities. It scans modules loaded into memory and is capable of unloading malicious .dlls during its removal routine. Add-ons are also available to get more out of the program, making it the ultimate spyware destroyer. Some spyware makes changes to TCP/IP settings which can corrupt if the components aren't removed correctly. The LSP Explorer add-on gives access to the Layered Security Providers to determine the likelihood of Winsock corruption. In these circumstances, make a note of the company name and check the Add or Remove Program Lists for the presence of an uninstaller. In the event of loss of Internet connection following use of Ad-Aware, run the Winsock Fix provided on the coverdisc to restore settings.

HJTHotkey is an automated search tool that scans a Hijack This log, providing direct searches of dedicated sites to obtain more information. Ideally, this tool should only be used by trained professionals as some listed components could be legitimate and should not be removed.

B3D Projector is a spyware program

Lavasoft's latest version of Ad-Aware uses advanced Code Sequence Identification technology

Hijack This is an intricate tool typically used by security specialists to analyse systems for the presence of browser hijackings

Advanced Process Termination (APT) is a tiny utility that uses brute force with nine types of termination

from Brilliant Digital that comes bundled with some versions of Kazaa and other peer-to-peer files-sharing programs. B3D Killer removes all traces of the Brilliant Digital spyware from your system. If you've been afflicted with spyware after using Kazaa, then it may also be worth running KaZaABeGone. This tool scans your computer for all files and registry entries created as a result of installing Kazaa, and should be used after running the uninstaller to remove components left behind.

VX2 Cleaner is another Ad-Aware add-on, which can be used to remove a pesky variant of the VX2 parasite that can't be removed with Ad-Aware. After installation, run Ad-Aware, click Add-ons and select VX2 Cleaner and press Run Tool.

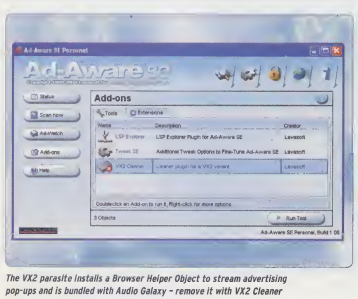
Kill2Me is a standalone cleaning tool, which is designed to remove all traces of the Look2Me parasite that integrates with Explorer on Windows 98/Me systems.

ADS Spy scans the system for Alternate Data Streams (ADS) on NTFS hard drives running Windows XP/2000. Recently, browser hijackers and Trojans have been using this technique to store hidden executable files in ADS streams using random files.

CoolWeb Search is a browser hijacker but has a payload similar to a backdoor Trojan. Unfortunately, this nasty will also evade security software, leaving mass destruction in its wake. It exploits the ByteCode Verifier vulnerability in Microsoft's Java Virtual Machine. The preferred deterrent is to use Sun Java from **http://java.sun.com/getjava/index.html** instead of Java VM, although Microsoft released a patch for this flaw back in April 2003. CWShredder can eradicate CoolWeb Search components, Spyware Blaster protects against the majority of these variants and Ad-Aware includes detection in its definitions database.

One notorious variant is GreatSearch.Biz, which is difficult to remove successfully. To identify the randomly named malicious files, start the computer in Safe Mode by pressing F8 immediately after switching on your PC. Launch Windows Explorer and click Tools/Folder Options and enable hidden and system files. Navigate to c:\Windows\system32\ folder and click the Modified column to sort by descending date. Right-click the newest files, select Properties and if no company information is available, move the files to the Desktop. Follow our step-by-step guide on page 21 to obliterate this parasite.

> "One notorious variant is GreatSearch.Biz that is difficult to remove successfully"



The VX2 parasite installs a Browser Helper Object to stream advertising pop-ups and is bundled with Audio Galaxy – remove it with VX2 Cleaner

Final clearout

If the hijacker is persistent and no removal tools successfully rid your system of the malware, you'll need to delve deep into the guts of Windows. In extreme circumstances you may have to resort to using Registrar Lite to reveal the APPINIT_DLLs and a process killer such as KillBox to kill these troublesome pests. In other instances, you may find that files refuse to delete because they're being used by Windows. MoveOnBoot installs a context menu entry for easy access to mark files for deletion during the startup process, before the module is loaded into memory.

Finally, it's always good practice to empty your Temporary Internet files periodically to eliminate the possibility of nasties, particularly if you've inadvertently visited undesirable sites. MRU Blaster is a freeware utility that removes all Most Recently Used Lists (MRU) and also includes an IE Cleaner plug-in. The plug-in deletes the files in the browser cache and also empties the Index.dat at startup.

INFO

Program	Price	Website
Sygate Personal Firewall	Free	www.sygate.com
AVG Anti-Virus Free Edition 7*	Free	www.grisoft.com
Trojan Remover	Free	www.simpysup.com
RegistryProt	Free	www.diamondcs.com.au
SpyBlocker	US$19.95	www.spyblocker-software.com
SpywareBlaster	Free	www.javacoolsoftware.com
SpywareGuard	Free	www.javacoolsoftware.com
IE-Spyad	Free	https://netfiles.uiuc.edu/ehowes/www/resource.htm
Spybot – Search & Destroy	Free	www.safer-networking.org
StopITNow	Free	www.stopitnow.com.au
Mailwasher	US$37	www.mailwasher.net
MailFrontier Desktop	US$29.95	www.mailfrontier.com
Pop-up Stopper	Free	www.panicware.com
Google Toolbar		http://toolbar.google.co.uk
DSO Stop	Free	www.nsclean.com
SockLock	Free	www.nsclean.com
HTA Stop 2003	Free	www.nsclean.com
WNetEnumCachedPasswords Lock Patch	Free	www.diamondcs.com.au
WSH Anti-Polymorphism Patch	Free	www.diamondcs.com.au
Bug Off	Free	www.spywareinfo.com
XP Antispy	Free	www.xpantispy.org
DCOMbobulator**	Free	http://grc.com/dcom/
Ad-Aware SE Personal Edition	Free	www.lavsoftusa.com
LSP Explorer	Free	www.lavasoftusa.com
Winsock Fix	Free	http://digital-solutions.co.uk
HJTHotkey	Free	http://hometown.aol.co.uk/jrmct137/HJTHotkey/
B3D Killer	Free	www.wiidersecurity.com
Ad-Aware VX2 Cleaner	Free	www.lavasoftusa.com
Kill2Me	Free	www.spywareinfo.com
ADS Spy	Free	www.richardthelionhearted.com/~merijn/
CoolWeb Search	Free	www.intermute.com
Registrar Lite	Free	www.resplendence.com/regiite
KillBox	Free	http://download.broadbandmedic.com
MoveOnBoot	Free	www.qibinsoft.net
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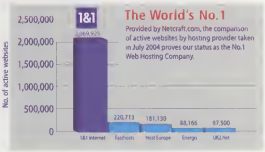

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	• Point external domains to 1&1	50	50
	WEBSITE/CONNECTIVITY		
BOOSTED	Web space	800 GB	800 GB
BOOSTED	FTP Access Accounts	5	5
	• Monthly traffic included	10 GB	10 GB
	• Protected by up-to-date Firewall	✓	✓
	• Daily backups	✓	✓
	APPLICATIONS		
	• WebsiteCreator	12 pgs	12 pgs
	• Full Version Software worth £400	✓	✓
	• New 1&1 Control Panel	✓	✓
	E-MAIL		
BOOSTED	IMAP/POP3 e-mail accounts	300	300
	• Autoresponders included	✓	✓
	• E-mail aliases	500	500
	• New 1&1 Webmail	✓	✓
BOOSTED	Virus Scanning for Accounts	5 Acc.	5 Acc.
	• Spam Filtering	✓	✓
	• Newsletter Tool	✓	✓
	WEBSITE FEATURES		
	• Ready-to-run CGI Library	✓	✓
	• PHP 3, 4 and 5	✓	✓
	• ASP Scripting Supported	–	✓
	• FrontPage extensions supported	✓	✓
	• Password Protection	✓	✓
	• Raw Log files	✓	✓
	CRM/E-COMMERCE		
	• 1&1 WebStatistics	✓	✓
	• 1&1 WebElements	✓	✓
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	• Point external domains to 1&1	100	100
	WEBSITE/CONNECTIVITY		
BOOSTED	Web space	2.5 GB	2.5 GB
BOOSTED	FTP Access Accounts	10	10
	• Monthly traffic included	20 GB	20 GB
	• Protected by up-to-date Firewall	✓	✓
	• Daily backups	✓	✓
	• Shared SSL or optional own SSLCertificate	✓	✓
	• Password protection	✓	✓
	APPLICATIONS		
	• WebsiteCreator	25 pgs	25 pgs
	• Full Version Software worth £400	✓	✓
	• New 1&1 Control Panel	✓	✓
	E-MAIL		
BOOSTED	IMAP/POP3 e-mail accounts	700	700
	• Autoresponders included	✓	✓
	• E-mail aliases	1,500	1,500
	• New 1&1 Webmail	✓	✓
BOOSTED	Virus Scanning for Accounts	10 Acc.	10 Acc.
	• Spam Filtering	✓	✓
	• Newsletter Tool	✓	✓
	WEBSITE FEATURES		
	• Access Database supported	–	✓
	• My SQL Database	1x100MB	–
	• Ready-to-run CGI Library	✓	✓
	• PHP3/4/5, Perl & Free CGIs	✓	–
	• ASP Scripting Supported	–	✓
	• ASP.NET & .NET Framework	–	✓
	• FrontPage extensions supported	✓	✓
	• Password Protection	✓	✓
	• Raw Log files	✓	✓
	• SSI	✓	✓
	CRM/E-COMMERCE		
	• In2Site Dialogue	✓	✓
	• 1&1 WebStatistics	✓	✓
	• 1&1 WebElements	✓	✓
	• 1&1 WebDatabase	✓	✓
	• Chat Channels	5	5
	• Customisable Forums	✓	✓
	EXPRESS SUPPORT		
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The next generation of processors is now available, but what do they offer over 32-bit chips?

64-bit computing

Evolution seems to be a gradual process of improvement, and over a long period of time, things slowly get better. If you study evolution in more depth though, you'll discover it's not quite as smooth as you might expect and every now and then, there is a big step forward. Something new comes along and the whole world changes.

This is just as true in the computer world as it is in the animal kingdom. For the past few years we've had a gradual evolution in processors that has given us steady increases in PC performance, and software has improved too. Over the next year or two, computing will take a big leap forward instead of the tiny steps of the past.

For the last 10 years, 32-bit PC processors have been running a 32-bit operating system – Windows. However, a new generation of processor and software is just around the corner. Both Intel and AMD have introduced 64-bit processors and Microsoft has a 64-bit version of Windows XP up its sleeve, just waiting for the right time to introduce it. You can go to the high street and buy a 64-bit PC right now and download the 64-bit edition of Windows XP Professional for free, if you don't mind running beta software that might have the odd bug or two.

We're entering a transition period. There are lots of old 32-bit processors in existing PCs and a wide variety of 32-bit processors for sale with brand new PCs. A 32-bit operating system, Windows XP, is being bundled with these PCs. However, in the last year, 64-bit processors have become widely available. The only problem is that these 64-bit PCs are bundled with a 32-bit operating system and they are used to run 32-bit software, so we have a hybrid 32/64-bit system.

This situation is reminiscent of the mid 1990s when we made the jump from the Intel 486 processor to the Pentium and from Windows 3.1 (16-bit) to Windows 95 (32-bit). The change is now from 32-bit to 64-bit and it is every bit as exciting as the previous evolutionary leap.

Roland Waddilove

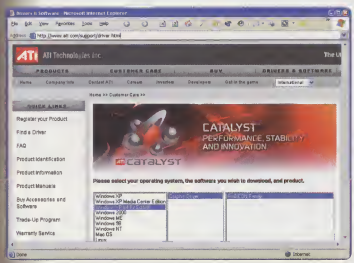
Blind alleys

In the mid 1990s, Intel produced a processor called the Pentium Pro that was a true 32-bit chip. It was designed to encourage everyone to upgrade from 16-bit and it ran 32-bit code extremely quickly. However, most people still had lots of 16-bit software and the Pentium Pro ran 16-bit code very poorly. This meant that the processor was about as popular as a chocolate teapot and most people avoided it. It led Intel up a blind alley.

They say that history repeats itself and Intel has developed a 64-bit processor called the Itanium. It runs 64-bit programs on a 64-bit operating system really well, but it has to switch to an emulation mode in order to execute 32-bit programs. The problem is that everyone has lots of 32-bit software and running it under an emulator is inefficient. It is not surprising that you don't see Itanium PCs offered for sale to consumers in the high street and they are mainly sold to large corporations running databases and technical applications.

AMD has chosen another route to 64-bit processing and has produced 64-bit chips that run 32-bit code as well as existing 32-bit chips. AMD64, as the family of 64-bit processors is known, starts up in ordinary 32-bit mode by default and it runs 32-bit code blindingly fast. However, it can switch to 64-bit mode when the occasion arises. Of course, it won't do this when running standard software on ordinary Windows XP, but if you download and install the beta version of Windows XP Professional x64, the processor will run in 64-bit mode.

The ability of AMD64 processors to operate equally well in either 32 or 64-bit mode means the technology is future-proof. With one of these processors in your computer, as soon as 64-bit software becomes widely available, you can upgrade and take advantage of it without having to change your hardware. What's more, if you upgrade to 64-bit Windows, you can still run most of your existing 32-bit software.



ATI has beta version drivers for running on Windows XP 64-bit edition

Windows XP Professional x64

This 64-bit version of Windows is designed for the AMD Athlon 64 and 64 FX, AMD Opteron, Intel Xeon and Pentium 4 processors with EM64T support, but not the Itanium. You need at least 1.5GB of hard disk space and 256MB of RAM. This is pre-release software and you cannot buy it in the shops. However, you can download it for free from **www.microsoft.com/windowsxp/64bit/default.mspx** or order it on CD. The operating system is time limited and runs for 360 days.

If you want to upgrade to 64-bit computing, download this version of Windows XP Professional

Driver issues

If you have about 10GB of space on your hard disk drive, create a new partition and install Windows XP 64-bit edition in it. The new operating system co-exists with the 32-bit version and when you boot the PC, you can choose the one you want to start.

Installing 64-bit Windows is only part of the upgrade process and 64-bit versions of all your drivers are needed. This includes the sound card, video card, printer, scanner and whatever else you have in your computer. Video card manufacturers already have beta versions of 64-bit drivers and if you have an ATI card, you may have already noticed that on the download page at **www.ati.com/support/driver.html**, there is an option to select a 64-bit Catalyst driver. Similarly, Nvidia offers a 64-bit driver for download at **www.nvidia.com/content/drivers/drivers.asp**. After installing it, download Nvidia's Blobby Dancer. This graphics demo shows off the power of AMD's new 64-bit processors.

You'll need all-new 64-bit drivers when you upgrade to 64-bit Windows

Creative is also preparing for the next generation of processors and Windows and at the company's public preview website, at **http://preview.creativelabs.com/default.aspx**, are 64-bit drivers for the SoundBlaster Live, Audigy and Audigy 2 sound cards. There is a useful collection of 64-bit drivers at **www.short-media.com/download.php** too.

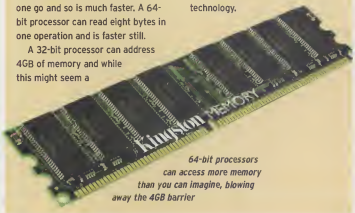
64-bit software

It is hardly surprising that 64-bit software is rare with so few 64-bit PCs in circulation. However, its profile will steadily increase over the next few years. There is a 64-bit version of SiSoftware's Sandra and it works pretty much like the standard version. You can analyse the PC and identify hardware components, and measure the performance of the memory, hard disk, video and so on. POV-Ray is a well known freeware raytracing program for drawing 3D scenes and a 64-bit version is available on the Downloads page. Smokey City Design has a beta version of its Panorama Factory digital camera software and this program stitches together two or more photographs to create panoramic images.

A bit better

You may be wondering what exactly it is about a 64-bit processor and 64-bit software that makes them better than their 32-bit cousins. At one time, processors were 8-bit devices and they could read one byte of data (8 bits) in one operation. Data stored in four bytes would require four operations because it would have to be fetched one byte at a time. A 32-bit processor can read four bytes in one go and so is much faster. A 64-bit processor can read eight bytes in one operation and is faster still.

A 32-bit processor can address 4GB of memory and while this might seem a lot today, 10 years ago we thought that 4MB was a lot and look what we need to run Windows now! In a couple of years' time, you will find the 4GB memory barrier of 32-bit processors severely limiting as you try to edit digital music, photographs and video. A 64-bit processor can address billions of megabytes of memory, so the amount of RAM you can use is only limited by your funds and not by technology.



64-bit processors can access more memory than you can imagine, blowing away the 4GB barrier

The graphics in the 64-bit version of Shadow Ops: Red Mercury (right) are far superior to the 32-bit version (left)

Several games developers have been experimenting with 64-bits in an effort to make games more realistic and to squeeze more performance out of a system. There is a 64-bit version of Unreal Tournament, but the snag is that it is a Linux version. However, Shadow Ops: Red Mercury includes a specially enhanced version for AMD64 running Windows 64-bit in the box right now and it offers superior graphics when playing the game. To see the difference, go to **www.atari.com/shadowops/us/amd.html.**

Virus protection

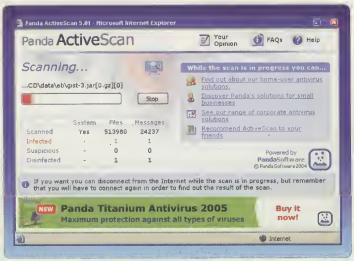
The benefits of 64-bit processors don't end with their increased performance. If you have a 64-bit AMD processor and Windows XP Service Pack 2, then you have virus protection features that aren't available with 32-bit chips. This doesn't mean that you'll never catch a virus or that you don't need antivirus software, but it does add extra security to the system and it makes it harder for viruses to infect a system and then to spread.

This system works by designating certain areas of the computer's memory as containing only data, which means that a program like a virus cannot execute. The idea is to trap buffer overflows and prevent code being executed. When the memory is marked as data only, some worms, viruses, and Trojans become short-lived and non-contagious. The technology has a variety of names, such as NX (No eXecute), DEP (Data Execution Protection, and EVP (Enhanced Virus Protection.

Conclusion

We currently have a Catch-22 situation in which manufacturers will not make 64-bit software until there are lots of 64-bit computers running 64-bit Windows. However, people will not buy 64-bit PCs unless there is lots of software. This always limits the speed at which new technology spreads – as the user base grows, so will demand for 64-bit applications.

In the future, we will all be running 64-bit Windows on a 64-bit processor, but the mass market moves slowly. Even though nearly all software is still 32-bit, there are benefits from buying a 64-bit system right now. The most important of these is future proofing. You don't want to spend £1,500 on a top-of-the-range PC only to find it out of date this time next year. AMD's 64-bit chips run 32-bit code as fast as any 32-bit processor and when 64-bit software hits the shelves, you will be ready to run it.



AMD64 has built-in protection against attacks by certain forms of viruses, but don't throw away your antivirus software just yet

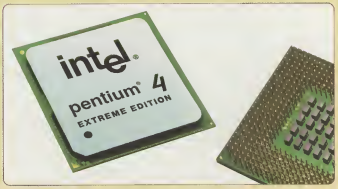
AMD

AMD64 is the name for AMD's 64-bit family of processors. The Opteron is for network servers and workstations in large businesses and it is designed for multiprocessor systems. The Athlon 64 range is for consumers and there are desktop and mobile versions for laptop computers. The Athlon 64 FX-55 is the top-of-the-range chip and it offers the best performance for games, video editing and other multimedia applications.

This is the best 64-bit processor for desktop PCs, if you can afford it. The plain vanilla Athlon 64 is cheaper

Intel

Intel has been caught napping, but the problem is not a lack of 64-bit chips. The Itanium and Xeon have been around for some time. However, these use a different architecture and are suitable only for large corporations running servers and workstations. Intel does not have a 64-bit consumer chip. The company is playing catch-up with AMD by adding 64-bit extensions called EM64T to the Pentium 4. This will enable it to run 32-bit software in the usual way, but also to take advantage of 64-bit. It will have the virus protection feature of AMD's chip too.



Intel is adding 64-bit extensions to the Pentium 4 and a new generation of chips will be available in 2005

INFO

Program	Price	Web
Sandra	£21	www.sisoftware.co.uk
Panorama Factory beta	Free	www.panoramafactory.com
POV-Ray	Free	www.povray.org/download/
Blobby Dancer	Free	www.nzone.com/object/nzone_danceramd64_home.html
Windows XP 64-bit	Free (beta)	www.microsoft.com/windowsxp/64bit/default.mspx
Unreal Tournament 2004 demo	Free	www.unrealtournament.com/ut2004/downloads.php

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Hands-on

How to guides

Catalogue your software collection 32
Create a searchable library of your entire CD and DVD collection quickly and easily.

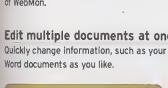
Catalogue your software collection, page 32

Boost the power of Microsoft Outlook, page 34

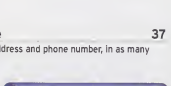
Boost the power of Microsoft Outlook 34
We show you how to add even more features to Microsoft's advanced email client with some great free tools.

Monitor websites for changes 36
Find out when your favourite websites have changed since your last visit with the aid of WebMon.

Edit multiple documents at once 37
Quickly change information, such as your address and phone number, in as many Word documents as you like.



Monitor websites for changes, page 36



Edit multiple documents at once, page 37

Set up a portable browser and email client 38
Use your email client and browser on any PC by storing them on your USB memory stick.

Coverdisc software

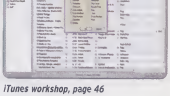
Most of the guides in our Hands-on section, including our in-depth workshops, use utility software featured on this month's coverdisc. Unless otherwise stated, you'll find all the programs you need under the Essentials tab, meaning you can start following the guides straightaway.

Set up a portable browser and email client, page 38

Workshops

20 tips: Paint Shop Pro 9 40
Paint Shop Pro 9 is the latest version of Jasc's popular graphics application. In this month's 20 tips section, we explore the program's new features including its great selection of art brushes for painting your own virtual pictures.

20 tips: Paint Shop Pro 9, page 40



iTunes workshop, page 46

Registry workshop 44
The registry is one of the most important components of Windows, and acts as a database of configuration settings for all aspects of the operating system. In the latest instalment of our regular registry workshop, we investigate ways to tweak the settings of both Internet Explorer and Outlook Express.

iTunes workshop 46
iTunes is one of the most widely used PC music players and with the introduction of the iTunes Music Store, it has led a revolution in the way we get hold of new music. In this month's utility workshop, we explain how to use iTunes to rip music, create playlists and burn CDs from your music collection.

Catalogue your software collection

Keep track of your ever-growing CD, DVD and CD-ROM collection with the aid of cdTree

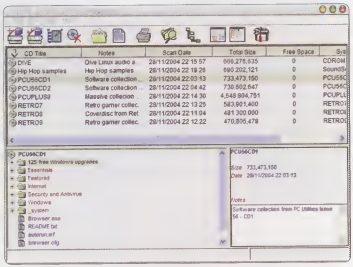
As every PC Utilities reader surely knows, keeping track of your ever-expanding software collection is an extremely difficult task. Each of our coverdiscs adds another 500 or more programs to your collection, and our regular two CD issues further compound the problem. We almost feel like apologising - not for providing you with the best software collection in the world, but for causing you problems when it comes to locating individual files within this massive collection. Unless you've got the encyclopaedic knowledge of our coverdisc team, it's nigh on impossible to know off the top of your head what disc contains the application you're looking for. Of course, you can refer back to the listings printed in the magazine, but not only does this rely on you keeping all your back issues of PC Utilities near your machine but it's also a very daunting task if you've been buying the magazine for some years and now have dozens of coverdiscs. Fortunately, we've found an excellent free utility called cdTree (**www.vbknowledgesolutions.com**) that solves the problem by producing a searchable library of all your discs.

The program works by scanning through each of your discs and producing a listing of its contents. This listing is added to a database you can then browse through without having the disc inserted. It is possible to add a comment to every CD to help remind you of its contents, and to assist in finding it amongst your collection in the future. cdTree enables you to scan both CD-ROMs and DVDs, and even add audio CDs to your database.

The cdTree interface is very similar to Windows Explorer, so while you are browsing through the contents of your discs it is easy to forget they're no longer inserted in the drive. Don't worry though, if you double-click on an application or try to load a document that isn't available, cdTree simply asks you to insert the CD first.

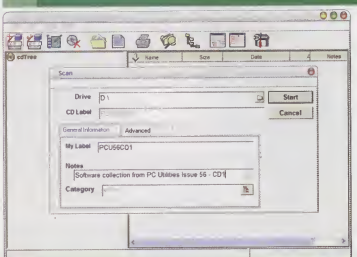
One of the most useful features of the program is its search tool which enables you to find files across your entire CD collection. Not only can you track down elusive files and documents, but you can also search the comments you've entered about each disc. If the same file is located on a number of different discs, the name of each CD or DVD is shown in the search results.

If a number of people use your computer, and each has their own collection of discs, it is possible create multiple catalogues to keep the information separate. You can also create different catalogues to separate your audio CDs from your data discs.

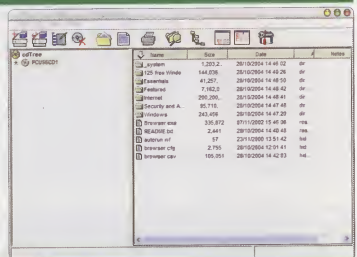


You can switch between an Explorer style view or a traditional view

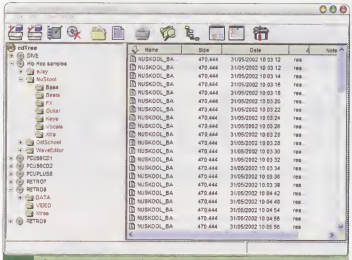
Catalogue your CD and DVDs using cdTree



STEP 1 *To add a disc to the database, press the Add CD button. This brings up the Scan dialog box. The CD label (the name of the disc) is generated automatically - you can enter a description of the CD's contents in the Notes section to add more detail. Press Start to scan the contents of the disc.*

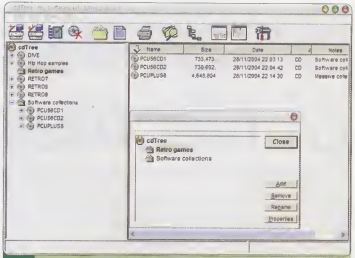


STEP 2 *It doesn't take the program long to scan the disc and add the details to your database. Within seconds you'll be able to view the disc in a Windows Explorer-style layout. The information is now safely stored in cdTree and you can eject the CD and add another disc to the database.*



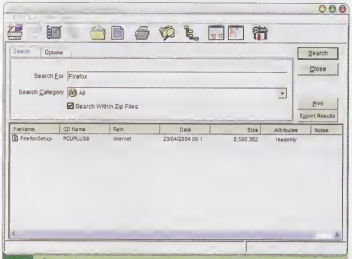
step 3

Once you've spent some time scanning your CDs, you'll build up a substantial database of information. You can now browse through the contents of your discs in the same way as if each CD was still inserted in your PC. To run any of the applications listed you have to insert the disc in question.



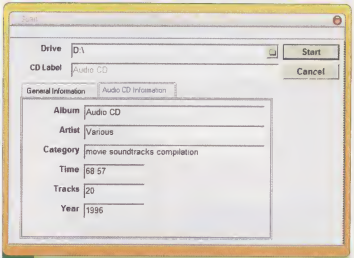
step 4

It's a good idea to add categories to your database to make it easier to locate certain CDs. Press the category maintenance button and then click on Add. Type in the name of the category and then press Close. Now you can drag and drop CDs into the category of your choice.



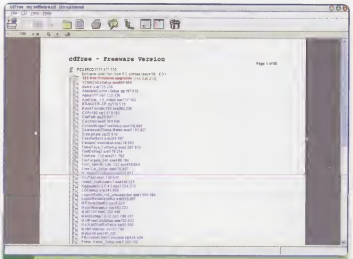
step 5

Even with the aid of categories, it still isn't easy to find individual files by manually looking for them. Instead, use cdTree's search facility. Press Find, enter the search criteria and click Search. The program locates your search item on any of the CDs and lists the results below.



step 6

When you add an audio CD, the program recognises it as such and automatically displays the Audio CD information tab. Enter the details for your audio CD and press Scan. The freeware version of cdTree doesn't grab track names from the Internet so you have to enter them manually.



step 7

As well as being able to view your CD collection on-screen, you can also print the contents of different CDs. Press the Preview/ Print icon to bring up the Preview Options dialog. You can print out an entire category or select a specific CD from the drop-down list. Click OK to view the preview.

step 8

If you get bored of the way the program looks it is possible to change its skin. Choose View/ Change Skin and then browse through the different skins in the Select Skin dialog box. The dialog box changes to offer a preview of each skin. Press OK to apply the skin to the entire interface.

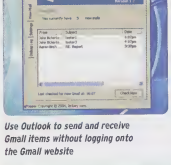
Boost the power of Microsoft Outlook

Outlook is far more powerful than Outlook Express, but you can make it better still with some excellent add-ons

Although Windows has come complete with Outlook Express for a while now, many people still opt for the more powerful Outlook as their email client. This is a good decision for those who use email extensively as it is the better of the two for dealing with large numbers of emails.

Outlook is usually supplied as part of Microsoft Office, but can be purchased as a standalone application if you have little use for Office's other features. Upon installing and running Outlook, it's not long before you realise it has a much larger collection of options than Outlook Express. Not only does the interface look radically different but it also contains a whole host of new and improved features. Such things as the Calendar and Contacts system can only be found in Outlook, and make it much easier to keep your life and contact information organised. By far the best feature of Outlook, however, is its improved speed and reliability. It can handle larger workloads than Outlook Express and is much more efficient at storing mails.

Despite offering this extra emailing power Outlook isn't perfect and can be improved upon. So, with this in mind we've gathered together a selection of programs that augment Outlook's already impressive abilities.



Use Outlook to send and receive Gmail items without logging onto the Gmail website

Goutlook

The rather unfortunately titled Goutlook (**http://sourceforge.net/projects/goutlook**) is an add-on for Outlook 2003 that bestows upon the user some added functionality to mimic the increasingly popular Web mail service by Google, Gmail.

Using Goutlook you can manage and view your emails more productively by assigning labels to them. It is possible to label emails from office colleagues as Work and those from your family as Home, for example. Custom labels can be created from within Outlook, and search folders are automatically generated whenever you create a new item. If you need to, you can assign more than one label to a mail, so you can have a mail marked as both Very urgent and Work.

MAPILab NNTP for Outlook

Outlook users will be eager to find a surprising there's no proper newsgroup support to be found in the program, despite it being the most powerful email client around. This means that users who want Outlook and newsgroups have to use both Outlook and Outlook Express. This is a far from perfect solution, but conveniently MAPILab NNTP for Outlook (**www.mapilab.com**) sorts the problem out.

This Outlook enhancement enables you to create a new newsgroup folder and set up a new account. Newsgroup accounts are created in the same way as email, and many familiar options from Outlook Express are included. Once an account is created, you can subscribe to the threads you want to read, and check them by clicking Send and Receive. Groups are viewed and listed in the main Outlook window just like emails and they therefore benefit from all of Outlook's extra features.

gPopper for Gmail

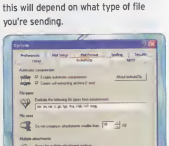
Web-based email accounts are great if you want to check your emails from any location, but you usually have to log onto the website every time you want to send a message. gPopper (**www.gnotify.com/gpopper/**), however, enables you to use Outlook to send and receive emails through Gmail.

After setting up your email details, the program runs in your System Tray at the bottom of the screen. Clicking on the icon lets you check your Gmail account for any new mail and set up auto notification options. Getting the program to work with your mail client isn't quite as easy, but it's still reasonably straightforward. For more information on setting up the program visit **www.gnotify.com/forum/**.

bxAutoZip

Email attachments open up a whole new world of possibilities in communication, but in order to keep services running smoothly, and to make sure there's enough bandwidth for everybody, many service providers apply restrictions on the size of attachments that can be sent. This is typically around 5MB per message.

To stop instances of emails bouncing back due to large file attachments, you should give bxAutoZip (**www.baxbex.com**) a try. This small Outlook addition places a new button on the main toolbar that enables the compression of attached files. By pressing this button when composing a mail, any attached items will be automatically compressed, saving precious space and decreasing your chance of getting it returned. It's claimed this process can reduce file sizes by as much as 90%, although this will depend on what type of file you're sending.



Keep your email attachment sizes down with bxAutoZip

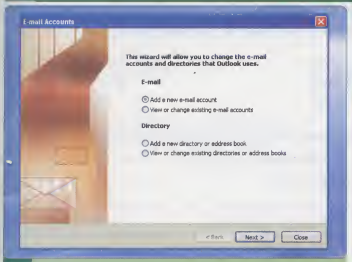
Lookout

Outlook has it's own search engine which is fine for basic functions, but isn't the most in-depth option around. However, with the aid of an Outlook plug-in called Lookout (**www.lookoutsoft.com**) you can add more power to your searches. It lets you perform very accurate searches using specific search criteria.

It works in much the same way as Internet searches, enabling you to use quotes to single out items ("meetings" for example) and use plus and minus signs to either add words to a search or exclude others.

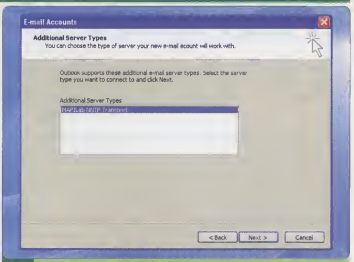
Once installed, LookOut first has to index your emails, which can take some time. Once this is done, you'll be able to search for anything you like. To use the new search features you simply have to enter your search item into the search field that will appear on the main toolbar then sit back and wait for the results.

Set up newsgroups in Outlook with MAPILab NNTP



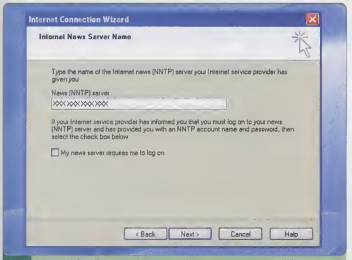
step 1

After you install MAPILab NNTP you are asked to create a newsgroup folder. Select the folder you want to use and proceed to Outlook. To begin you should create a new account for the newsgroup – go to Tools/ E-mail Accounts and select Add a New E-mail Account.



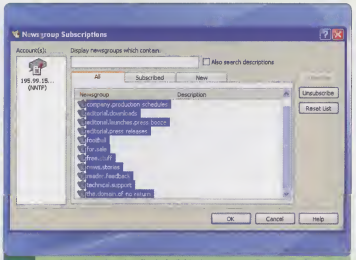
step 2

In the next screen select the Additional Server Types option and click Next. When the box is displayed, check what options are listed. Most users will only have the MAPILab NNTP option, which is fine. If you have more, make sure the MAPILab NNTP option is selected before clicking Next.



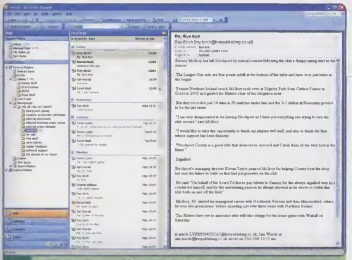
step 3

The next few dialogs are the same as the ones you see when setting up a new email account. Enter your screen name, email address and the address for the server you want to access. Once this is done, the account will almost be ready to use – but not quite!



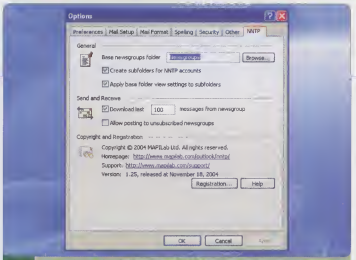
step 4

Next, you have to subscribe to individual newsgroups. From the main Outlook screen, go to Tools/ Newsgroups. A new dialog will appear listing the available topics, just like the equivalent option in Outlook Express. Select the newsgroups you want to view and click subscribe.



step 5

With the account set up and newsgroups subscribed to you can now click the Send and Receive button to download the newsgroup contents. These will now appear under the folder you set up before, with each newsgroup having its own folder. To view messages, select them as you would an email.



step 6

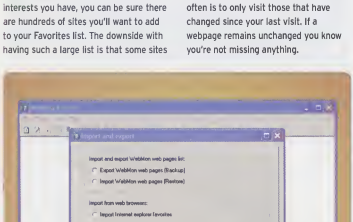
MAPILab NNTP is a fully configurable program, and it is possible to further tailor your newsgroups if you wish. To access these options, go to Tools/ Options and select the NNTP tab. From here you can change the newsgroup folder and the number of recent messages the application will download.

Monitor websites for changes

You don't need to visit webpages to find out if they have changed. We show you how to check for changes automatically

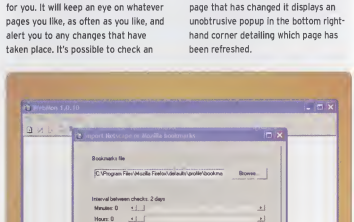
Keeping your Favorites list to a small selection is no easy task. No matter what hobbies and interests you have, you can be sure there are hundreds of sites you'll want to add to your Favorites list. The downside with having such a large list is that some sites will inevitably get overlooked in favour of a handful you visit every day. One way of ensuring you view different pages more often is to only visit those that have changed since your last visit. If a webpage remains unchanged you know you're not missing anything.

Tracking website changes is easy with WebMon (**www.markwell.btinternet.co.uk**), which takes care of the process for you. It will keep an eye on whatever pages you like, as often as you like, and alert you to any changes that have taken place. It's possible to check an unlimited number of webpages and schedule the checks as regularly as you desire. During its checks, when it finds a page that has changed it displays an unobtrusive popup in the bottom right-hand corner detailing which page has been refreshed.



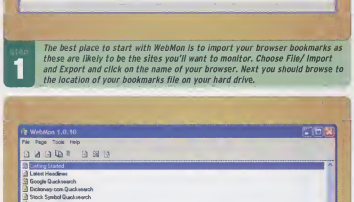
Step 1

The best place to start with WebMon is to import your browser bookmarks as these are likely to be the sites you'll want to monitor. Choose File/ Import and Export and click on the name of your browser. Next you should browse to the location of your bookmarks file on your hard drive.



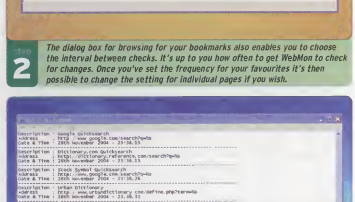
Step 2

The dialog box for browsing for your bookmarks also enables you to choose the interval between checks. It's up to you how often to get WebMon to check for changes. Once you've set the frequency for your favourites it's then possible to change the setting for individual pages if you wish.



Step 3

After your favourites list has loaded up, you should press the Check all web pages button to initiate the first scan of the sites. The first scan will of course produce a list showing no changes have been made. The next time you run the scan, however, you can see at a glance which sites have changed.



Step 4

You can print out a list of all the pages that have changed rather than just looking for the information onscreen. Choose Tools/ Preferences and click Update Logging. Tick the box underneath Plain-text format log file and click OK. Choose Tools/ Open log file/ Text log file to view and print the log.

Quickly edit multiple documents

When you change address, don't amend all your documents manually – use WordPipe to change everything at the click of a mouse

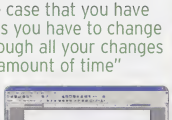
There are many occasions when you might have to make the same changes to numerous Word documents – if you want to update your website address or telephone number in multiple documents, for example. If you're responsible for corporate documentation, you will often have to alter dozens of templates and documents whenever key members of staff change. To make all the necessary changes manually can take a long time, to search for and replace a three letter word in over 450 documents. It found 82,429 occurrences of the word but still only took 10 minutes to make the changes required. Imagine how long that would have taken to do manually.

The program offers a number of useful options for when searching and replacing text. You can, for example, focus your search on only the headers and footers of your documents, which are commonly used to store contact

> "Even in the extreme case that you have hundreds of documents you have to change WordPipe still gets through all your changes in an impressive amount of time"

and the potential for human error is fairly high, particularly if you have to amend a large number of documents. A program called WordPipe saves you from performing these tedious tasks manually by executing multiple replacements in one speedy scan of your documents. All you need to do is set up the text you want to amend and the program takes care of everything else. It only takes a few minutes to set up the criteria for each replacement and once set up, WordPipe performs the replacements very quickly. What would have taken hours of meticulous manual work finding all the affected documents, opening them up, searching and replacing the text and saving the file again now takes minutes, and you can also rest assured the job will be completed without a single error.

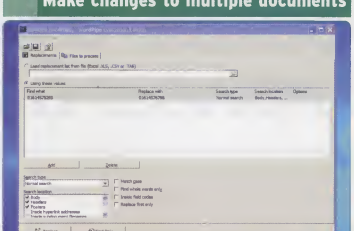
Even in the extreme case that you have hundreds of documents you have to change, WordPipe still gets through all your changes in an impressive amount of time. In tests by the program's developer, WordPipe was set



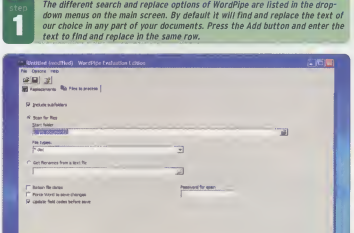
WordPipe makes it possible to change details such as your telephone number in all your Word documents at the same time

information. Similarly, you can restrict the search to text boxes and hyperlinks. It is possible to use any of Word's usual search and replace options, too, enabling you to select whether to match case and use wildcards in your searches. You can also search and replace words that sound like other words. As well as this it is possible to specify which type of file you want to include – you can limit it to .doc files or include different formats such as .rtf and .html files, too. The program even handles mail merge documents.

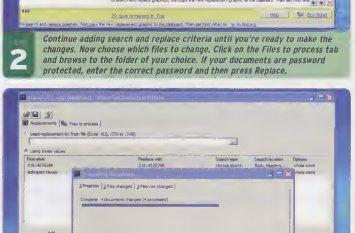
Make changes to multiple documents



Step 1 *The different search and replace options of WordPipe are listed in the drop-down menus on the main screen. By default it will find and replace the text of our choice in any part of your documents. Press the Add button and enter the text to find and replace in the same row.*



Step 2 *Continue adding search and replace criteria until you're ready to make the changes. Now choose which files to change. Click on the Files to process tab and browse to the folder of your choice. If your documents are password protected, enter the correct password and then press Replace.*



Step 3 *WordPipe now gets to work scanning for the text you want to change and replacing the text it finds. Surprisingly, it gets through your documents very quickly and within seconds you'll have a full set of amended files. The progress dialog shows you how many documents have been changed.*

Set up a portable browser & email client

Keep your browser and email program in your pocket with portable versions of Mozilla Firefox and Thunderbird

Many changes have been made to Windows over the years. Once it was little more than a simple operating system that, coupled with DOS, contained the bare bones required to run your hardware and software. But now things have changed: Windows is a true multimedia beast, with all manner of additions for a wide range of tasks. You can now play movies, listen to music, burn CDs, edit video clips, create images and much, much more, all without any extra software. But perhaps the most important development is its Internet and email communication features.

Surprisingly, Windows hasn't always been able to communicate with the Internet on its own, and Bill Gates famously dismissed the Internet as a passing fad that wouldn't be popular in the long run. He initially made a deliberate decision not to support Internet functionality within Windows, but it didn't take long for him to see the error of his ways. Nowadays, Internet Explorer is a staple part of Windows, as is Outlook Express, Windows' built-in email client.

This is all well and good for the majority of users as having an Internet browser and email client built into your operating system is an efficient way of working. However, it can also be very restricting, particularly if you do a lot of travelling.

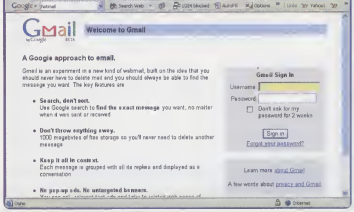
Anchored email

Users who have no choice but to continually travel due to work may find it tricky to keep in touch with others on a regular basis. The phone isn't always a good option due to the expense of calls, and not everyone has a laptop with a wireless connection to the Net. This means you may be limited to using Web-based email in Internet cafes or wherever you can find a computer, which isn't the best option when communicating to friends and family, and certainly isn't the most professional option for business.

Internet use, while it may not be quite as important as email for most people, is also limited when you use other systems, as you won't be able to access your favourites list, and you'll have no cookies or records of logins and so on. It's also not very secure, and using secure sites on another person's machine isn't advisable.

Even if you can successfully log in to your email account on someone else's computer, you don't really want to store your sent emails on another system, which again leaves only Web mail as an option.

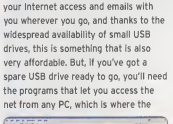
So, what can you do? Well, you could buy a laptop, or upgrade your old laptop to be able to use the Internet, but that would be expensive. A better way would be to use a portable Internet browser and email client.



Web-based mail is good, but it isn't the best option for business use

Wherever I lay my USB...

Having a portable Internet browser and email program is a great way of taking your Internet access and emails with you wherever you go, and thanks to the widespread availability of small USB drives, this is something that is also very affordable. But, if you've got a spare USB drive ready to go, you'll need the programs that let you access the net from any PC, which is where the portable versions of Firefox and Thunderbird come in.



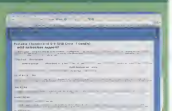
Firefox is considered by many to be a superior browser to IE, and it's now fully portable

As most PC Utilities readers will know, Firefox is a free alternative browser to Internet Explorer, and Thunderbird is an alternative to Outlook Express, which is also totally free. Unlike Internet Explorer and Outlook Express though, the portable versions of Firefox and Thunderbird options don't integrate into your OS in any way, and run from a stand alone folder. There are no DLL files, no registry entries, nothing. Because of this, true portability is possible, and here we have specially optimised versions of the programs, both designed to be run directly from a USB drive. Both programs can be placed onto a USB stick, and can then be used on any system directly from the USB device. No files are copied to the system, and your personal data is kept on your USB drive. Emails are also saved to the USB stick, as are bookmarks and cookies. Because of this, you can use the Internet and email the way you are used to from any PC, anywhere, as long as the PC has a Net connection.

Better still, setting up these two applications for portable use is easy, and you don't have to make any changes to the host PC in any way. Just pop in your USB stick and open the applications - simple.

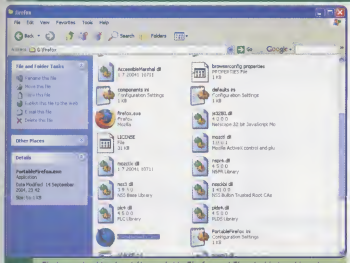
Check for updates

The portable versions of both Firefox and Thunderbird are free, and have been specially designed for use with USB drives. However, they are still work in progress and may still include some bugs. Because of this, we recommend you visit the author's website for the latest release notes and known issues. You'll also be able to download new updated versions as they become available. The website is http://johnhaller.com/jh/mozilla.



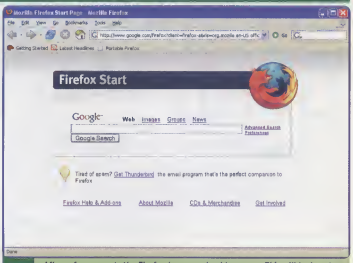
John Haller is the author of these two excellent programs, and his site has important information on using the applications

Get mobile with Portable Firefox and Thunderbird



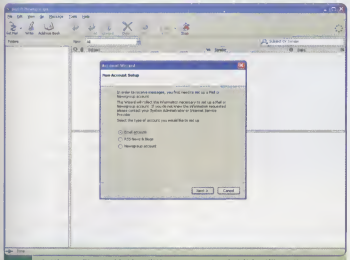
Step 1

First you should extract the portable Firefox and Thunderbird archives to your USB device. Make sure you extract them to the root of your device. Once done, click on PortableFirefox.exe – don't click Firefox.exe as this will create the usual files on your PC.



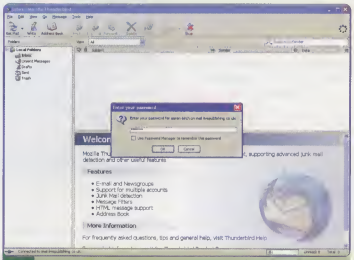
Step 2

After a few seconds the Firefox browser should open up. This will look and behave just like the normal version, except it has been modified to run on USB connections, and will not affect your PC or store files on the system. All data will be stored on your USB stick.



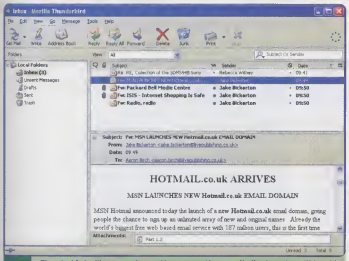
Step 3

Setting up Thunderbird is a little more complex, but it is still relatively easy. As with Firefox, copy over the program and then click the PortableThunderbird.exe to run the program. Next you should set up your account – select the Email Account option from the wizard.



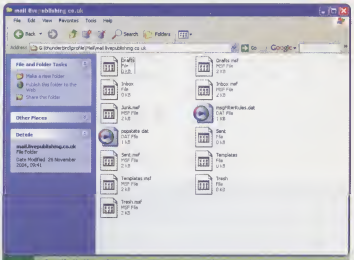
Step 4

Step through the wizard and enter the account details of your existing email service, including the same address, mail server and so on. Once this is done your account will be set up and ready to use. The final step is to enter your email password.



Step 5

Thunderbird will now work exactly as any other email client, and you'll be able to send and receive emails from all of your accounts (you can set up more than one). Sent mails will come from your main account, so there's really no need to use Hotmail anymore.



Step 6

One limitation of the portable versions of Firefox and Thunderbird will be storage. As both programs are designed to run from USB, and don't save files to the PC, you'll need space on the USB device to store temp files and email messages – back up your emails regularly to save space.

20 tips: Paint Shop Pro 9

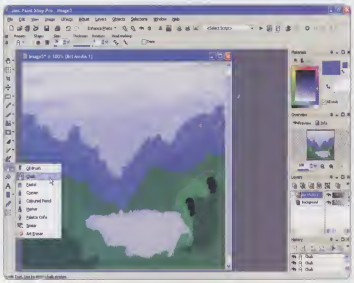
The brand new version of Jasc's hugely popular image editor boasts plenty of fantastic features

Paint Shop Pro has long been seen as a poor man's Adobe Photoshop, but this is doing it a great disservice. It may have begun life as a shareware program, but PSP has grown into a fully-featured, hugely polished, commercial package – and despite costing just a fraction of the price of Adobe's image editing powerhouse, it's packed to bursting point with powerful tools and effects. There's actually very little you can do with Photoshop that you couldn't achieve just as easily with PSP.

The recently-released version 9 introduces a number of interesting new features. Chief amongst these are the artistic options, which enable you to treat the screen like a virtual canvas. Effects like this used to be the sole preserve of expensive, dedicated programs such as Corel Painter, so it's great to see these incorporated into a mainstream, affordable image editor such as PSP.

Over the next few pages we'll take a look at all the major additions to PSP, and also investigate some of the less well known features which have been around for a while.

Dave Cusick



Chalk and the other Artist Material tools enable you to achieve some interesting effects

1 Get arty

PSP 9 offers a wide range of artistic tools, and by choosing the relevant option from the Tools toolbar, you can draw or paint on the screen using a variety of virtual media. Whether you fancy expressing yourself in chalk, pastel, crayon, coloured pencil, marker pen or oil brush, this is the place to come.

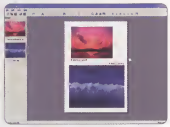
When you use one of these tools, a new Art Media layer is automatically created. Art Media layers have a couple of special options which aren't available for other layer types. Firstly, you can specify whether they should be wet or dry, by right-clicking on the layer in the Layer Palette and choosing the appropriate option. Secondly, you can adjust the canvas texture of the layer by right-clicking on the layer in the Layer Palette, then choosing Properties and then clicking the Canvas Texture tab.

3 Mix it up

When you're working with the Art Media tools, it's not always easy to visualise how different colours of paints or pastels will look when mixed together. You could just dive in and try something out, knowing that if it all goes wrong you can fall back on the Undo feature. Alternatively though, you can make use of the Mixer Palette. To open this, choose View/ Palettes/ Mixer or just hit Shift+F6. Here you can experiment to your heart's content. Once you've come up with the perfect colour, use the Mixer Dropper icon at the top of the window to choose this as the current foreground colour, and you're all set to use it in your picture.

4 Add captions

PSP 9 makes it easier than ever to print out your photographs for use in an album or a scrapbook. Just open up all the photographs you'd like to appear on a single page, then choose File/ Print Layout. This works like a simple desktop publishing program – you can simply drag the images onto the page, reposition and resize them as desired, and then add

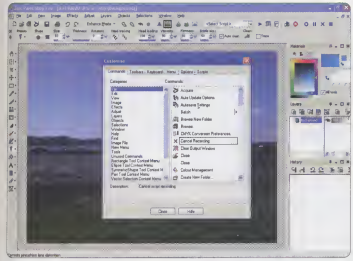


Creating your own photo album is easy thanks to the Print Layout function

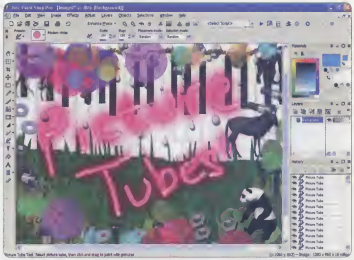
Using the Mixer Palette you can produce the perfect shade for your picture

Rewriting history

PSP has a History Palette which tracks each and every operation you perform. If you decide you want to undo everything you've done since a particular operation, highlight it in the History Palette and click the Undo To Here icon at the top of the palette. Alternatively, click the Undo This Step Icon to zap that particular operation but preserve everything you've done since.



Customise the Paint Shop Pro toolbar to suit your way of working



The selection of built-in Picture Tubes make it easy to build up a scene

captions using the Text icon in the toolbar at the top of the screen.

5 Customise your toolbar

Like the program itself, PSP's toolbar is crammed with power commands, some of which you may never use. You can tidy it up by customising it to your needs – adding commands that you may use often, for example, or removing ones that don't apply to you. You can even add separators to keep your new toolbar layout nicely organised. Right-click on the toolbar itself and choose the Customize option from the pop-menu. You can drag items from the window that appears, and drop them into the program's toolbars wherever you want. To remove an item from a toolbar, right-click on it when in the Customise mode and choose the Delete option.

6 Duplicity

To make a duplicate of an image you're working on, click Window/Duplicate. Your image will instantly pop up, copied into a new window. If you're about to risk all with a big, destructive edit, you'll have a backup immediately to hand should everything go wrong.

7 Hide the ants

If those little marching ants are getting in the way of the bigger picture, you can hide your selection marquees away. Hit Selections/Hide Marquee, or just press Ctrl+Shift+M, and your selection box will disappear from sight, though it will still be effective. Another click or press will toggle it back into view.

8 Colour depth

If you find PSP options are greyed out and unusable, the most likely explanation is that the image you're working on does not have sufficient colour depth for what you're trying to do. Click on Image/ Increase Colour Depth to see how many colours your image currently contains. If it's only 256 colours, many filters will not be available and you should use the Increase Colour Depth menu item to promote the image to its full capability of 16 million colours.

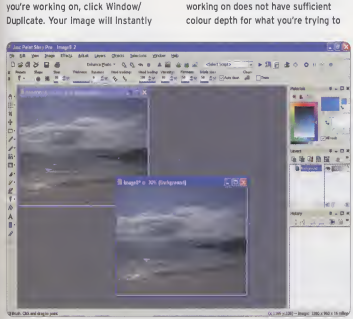
9 Take the tube

Most image editors these days have some sort of quick shapes facility, but few are as nice or versatile as PSP's Picture Tubes. Click on the Picture Tube icon in the Tools toolbar, then pick an image from the drop-down list at the top of the screen. Every time you click, the selected image will be painted into your existing image, and you can build up these images to create some very impressive effects.

10 Stick to the scripts

Just as Photoshop has Actions to automate tasks, PSP uses scripts. You'll find these in a drop-down menu on the toolbar; choose the one you want to run then click the little triangular Run Script icon to the right of the drop-down list. Here we've run the Photo Edges script.

Note that some of the scripts require you to enter options in dialog boxes along the way. Others require you to have pre-selected all or part of the image first.



Making changes? Create a duplicate copy of the original image first

Running scripts can give you professional results in seconds

If you're clever enough to program, PSP's website at **www.jasc.com** offers tutorials to get you started on making your own scripts.

11 Seek clarification

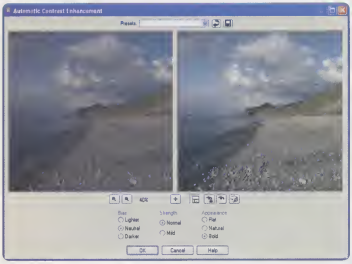
One way to subtly add depth to an image without artificial sharpening is to use PSP's Clarify tool. You'll find it under the Enhance Photo button on the main button bar. The tool works particularly well on a bold yet complex image such as a close-up of a flower, adding definition without making the image look over-sharpened.

Paint Shop Pro makes it easy to remove red-eye from your flash photographs

12 Lose the evil eye

Red-eye is the bane of photographers everywhere. It's caused by a camera flash bouncing off blood vessels behind the subject's retina, and it can turn the most innocent-looking victim into a demon. PSP has an excellent red-eye removal tool though, and you'll find it on the toolbar just along from the Enhance Photo button.

When you start the wizard, pan the right-hand preview window until you get the red eye(s) in the centre of it. Then go into the left-hand window and click and drag on an eye. By doing this, you'll draw a circle selection over the eye, and you'll see the red-eye magically disappear in the right-hand window. Then it's just a matter of centring and sizing your circle properly, after which



PSP's automatic tools actually give you a fair bit of manual control

you can alter a few other parameters such as giving your subject a glint, or even swapping their eye for that of an animal (should you want to)!

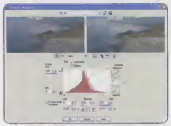
13 Use Automatic Contrast

If your photo is a little bit dull or washed out, you may be able to radically improve it using PSP's Automatic Contrast Enhancement feature. You'll find it under the Enhance Photo button, and when you use it you'll find that (thankfully) it isn't so automatic after all. The dialog has a total of eight radio buttons that you can experiment with, and these will give you some powerful control over the way your finished shot looks.

Once you've set up your image's contrast, use the Automatic Saturation tool (also under the Enhance Photo drop-down menu) to accentuate or play down the colourfulness of the picture.

14 Histograms

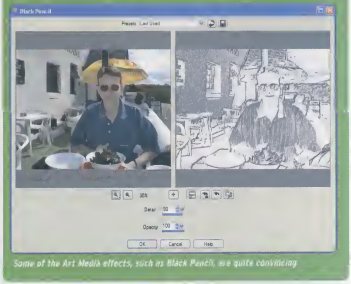
One method of colour tweaking that's really for the more experienced image editor is to use image histograms. Having said that, if you don't experiment, you won't learn, so click on Adjust/ Brightness and Contrast/ Histogram Adjustment (or just press Ctrl+Shift+H) to bring up the complex histogram dialog box. Try varying the sliders – you can't hurt your image if you click Cancel at the end, and if you persevere you'll eventually begin to learn how the separate channels interact to build up the composite information in an image.



Histograms are complex creatures – but that's what makes them interesting

15 Chalk boarding

If you want to make someone look like they've been drawn in chalk, hit Effects/ Art Media Effects/ Coloured Chalk. There are a great many different variations in the Art Media box, including charcoal, pencil and coloured crayon effects. A good idea when applying effects is to select half the picture and use the marquee before you apply the effect. Then you can view your changes directly against the original.



Some of the Art Media effects, such as Black Pencil, are quite convincing

16 One-step wonder

If you're a bit nervous about all this image correction, try the One Step Photo Fix feature. Select this from the Enhance Photo drop-down box, then sit back as your picture changes stage by stage and (hopefully) comes to life before your eyes. Jasc has gone for a conservative mix of the main tools (saturation, clarify, and so on) and you'll find this actually does a good job on a wide range of pictures. If it doesn't go far enough, try running it a second time – you can always undo it if you don't like the result.

The One Step Photo Fix is ideal if you're feeling lazy or are short on time

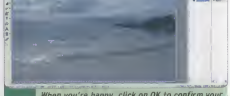
17 Dodge and burn

PSP puts these two traditional photographer's tricks onto a single tool – the Lighten/Darken brush in the toolbox. It's simple really. Click on the tool and drag it around your image while holding down the left mouse button to dodge (or lighten) the image.

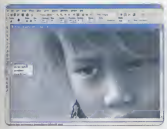
Colour correct your photographs

Step 1 *If you're an experienced photographer, you'll know that digital camera images often have colour casts to them – particularly if taken by a cheaper camera. PSP lets you correct these colour casts quickly and easily. Click Enhance Photo, then choose Automatic Colour Balance.*

Step 2 *Click the Zoom Out icon so you can see the whole picture. Now use the Illuminant Temperature slider to make your picture warmer or cooler as required. This picture is too warm; it was taken on a spring day which was sunny but cool, so we'll drag the slider to the right.*



Step 3 *When you're happy, click on OK to confirm your selections and go back to your image with the changes applied. You might also want to get some other filters and effects in on the action to make sure your image has the most accurate colours possible.*



Some old photographer's tricks make their way into the latest PSP

Use the right-button to burn (or darken) it. Use the mass of options that take over the toolbar when you click on this tool to set up the density, opacity and even rotation of your brush.

18 Dream on

To give an image a magical or romantic feel, add a bit of soft focus – Paint Shop Pro makes this particularly easy. Just click on the Adjust menu and select Softness/ Soft Focus. You should find that tweaking the halo parameters upwards and the softness downwards a bit gives you a natural effect.

19 Kaleidoscope effects

This effect won't enhance your photos so much as turn them into stunning new works of art. Click on Effects/ Reflection Effects/ Kaleidoscope and you'll get a dialog box that will turn your image into exactly that. This effect works best with images that have a lot of colours and a broad lighting spectrum – simply dabble with the parameters and when your preview looks good, hit OK to transform your image. Another effect, Seamless Tiling (which you'll find under the Image Effects menu) provides a kaleidoscope effect in which your original image is still recognisable.

A bit of soft focus can make all the difference to those shots of memorable moments

20 Age your pictures

To add a crusty, rustic old feel to that modern shot, try using the Aged Newspaper effect. This will instantly give your photos a back-in-time feel, even though it's not a true sepia tone and does in fact let some of the original colours through. To apply this effect click Effects/ Artistic Effects/ Aged Newspaper and use the Amount To Age slider to control the strength of the filter.

Paint Shop Pro's unusual Kaleidoscope effect will take you back to your childhood

Take the modern sheen off your photos with an old chip paper

1 million domains
Secure yours today with the UK's largest!
Prices slashed
1 Register your domain now instantly! Get more for your money with UKreg.
ALL INCLUSIVE Great value domain registration with no hidden charges
.co.uk .org.uk .me.uk £2.95 Total price per year
.com .org .net £8.89 Total price per year
.info £8.89 per year
.biz £8.89 per year
.name £8.99 per year
.plc.uk £2.95 per year
.ltd.uk £2.95 per year
.tv £30.99 per year
Includes all registration fees. Excludes VAT.
FREE with every domain:
FREE Email forwarding
FREE Website forwarding
FREE Dialup internet access
FREE Web based control panel
FREE Name server changes
2 Use your domain for professional email & a website. It's quick & easy!
✔ Use email right away: you@yourdomain.com
✔ Web mail & 200 professional POP3 email boxes
✔ Email virus protection included
✔ Easy instant website creation tool
✔ 750 MB professional web space
✔ FREE 24/7 technical support
✔ Simple web based control panel
✔ PHP and Perl scripting
Standard ONLY £3.99 Flat monthly fee
FREE instant setup
Massive discounts for bulk buys
Cheapest .com .org .net in the UK
ICANN Affilias Nominet UK BBB
Sign up now at
UKreg.com

Registry workshop

Take full control of Internet Explorer and Outlook Express and achieve a dramatic efficiency boost with some clever registry hacking

Why accept the default settings configured during a Windows installation? More and more people are jumping off the Microsoft bandwagon to use Mozilla and Firefox, but the only reason there are less vulnerabilities with alternative browsers is purely because they haven't been unearthed. Rest assured, when the script kiddies get more familiar with them, more loopholes will be exploited. Because of Internet Explorer's popularity and the length of time it's been available, we have a better understanding of how it works and the same goes for Outlook Express.

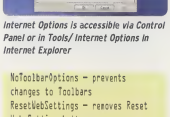
Windows XP Service Pack 2 users are already reaping the benefits of the extra security features bolted onto Internet Explorer and Outlook Express, such as HTML email restriction, built-in pop-up blocker and Add-on Manager. Although these are welcome additions, there are still some areas that could be more accessible without hacking the registry. That's exactly what we're here to deal with in this month's Registry workshop. We delve deep into the guts of the infamous browser and email client to uncover ways to increase security, remove ISP branding and tweak hidden settings.

Caroline Lyons

Internet Explorer

If your system is used by other family members, you can disable specific areas of the Control Panel to prevent changes being made to Internet Explorer and your Internet settings as a whole. Navigate to HKEY_LOCAL_MACHINE\Software\Policies\Microsoft\Internet Explorer\ and create a new DWORD with a value of '1', using the list below:

```
AdvancedTab – removes Advanced tab
ConnectionsTab – removes
Connection tab
ContentTab – removes Content tab
GeneralTab – removes General tab
PrivacyTab – removes Privacy tab
ProgramsTab – removes Programs tab
SecurityTab – removes Security tab
Connwiz Admin Lock – disables
Internet Connection Wizard
```



Internet Options is accessible via Control Panel or in Tools/ Internet Options in Internet Explorer

```
NoToolbarOptions – prevents
changes to Toolbars
ResetWebSettings – removes Reset
Web Setting button
SecChangeSettings – disables
Security Zone settings
```

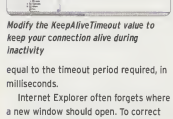
You can lock the toolbar to prevent other users making changes or dragging it to another location. Navigate to HKEY_CURRENT_USER\Software\Microsoft\Internet Explorer\Toolbar and create a new DWORD, Locked, with a value of '1'.

Internet Explorer is well known for freely giving away information about you, which is read by websites. Navigate to HKEY_LOCAL_MACHINE\SOFTWARE\Microsoft\Windows\CurrentVersion\Internet Settings\5.0\User Agent and create three new String Values, equal to the text you wish to see in place of the existing User Agent String:

```
Version – changes the Browser name
and version
Platform – changes the Windows
version displayed
```

If your ISP has added custom User Agent String information, you can remove this information by deleting the following key: HKEY_LOCAL_MACHINE\SOFTWARE\Microsoft\Windows\CurrentVersion\Internet Settings\User Agent\Post Platform.

Increasing the KeepAliveTimeout setting can help to overcome some Internet connection problems. Navigate to HKEY_CURRENT_USER\Software\Microsoft\Windows\CurrentVersion\Internet Settings and create a new DWORD, KeepAliveTimeout, with a value equal to the timeout period required, in milliseconds.



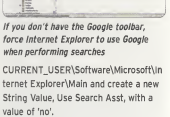
Modify the KeepAliveTimeout value to keep your connection alive during inactivity

Internet Explorer often forgets where a new window should open. To correct this, navigate to HKEY_CURRENT_USER\Software\Microsoft\Internet Explorer\Main and delete the Window_Placement value.

Search

To change the default search page, navigate to HKEY_CURRENT_USER\Software\Microsoft\Internet Explorer\Main and create a new DWORD, Use Custom Search URL, with a value of '1'. Navigate to HKEY_LOCAL_MACHINE\SOFTWARE\Microsoft\Internet Explorer\Search and create a new String Value, SearchAssistant, with a value equal to the URL. For example, to use the Google search assistant, set the value to 'http://www.google.com/ie'.

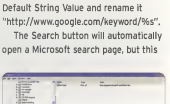
Windows XP users can go one step further and revert back to the classic search assistant. Navigate to HKEY_CURRENT_USER\Software\Microsoft\Internet Explorer\Main and create a new String Value, Use Search Asst, with a value of 'no'.



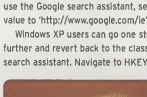
If you don't have the Google toolbar, force Internet Explorer to use Google when performing searches

Change the default search engine to Google. Navigate to HKEY_CURRENT_USER\Software\Microsoft\Internet Explorer\SearchUrl, right-click the Default String Value and rename it "http://www.google.com/keyword/%s".

The Search button will automatically open a Microsoft search page, but this

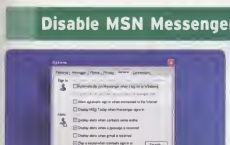


Browse Microsoft Knowledge Base articles faster to prevent having to enter the full URL

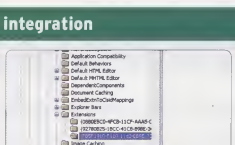


If you're experiencing problems with Internet Explorer or Outlook Express, you normally have to completely reinstall both programs. To reinstall Internet Explorer only, navigate to HKEY_LOCAL_MACHINE\SOFTWARE\Microsoft\Active Setup\Installed Components\{89B20200-ECBD-11cf-BBB5-00AA005B4383} and modify the IsInstalled DWORD to '0'. If it's only Outlook Express causing havoc, navigate to HKEY_LOCAL_MACHINE\SOFTWARE\Microsoft\Active Setup\Installed Components\{44BBAB40-CC51-11CF-AAFA-00AA00B6015C} and modify the IsInstalled DWORD to '0'. Windows 98/Me users can repair the current installation via Add or Remove Programs and selecting Internet Explorer/Repair Current Installation. In Windows XP, launch Windows Explorer and click Tools/ Folder Options and enable hidden and system files. Locate ie.inf, right-click and select Install.

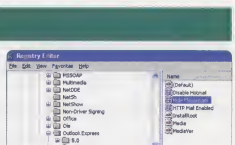
Disable MSN Messenger integration



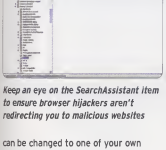
1 *Launch MSN Messenger and click Tools/ Options/ General and uncheck Automatically run Messenger when I log on to Windows and Allow automatic sign in when connected to the Internet. Click Start/ Run and type 'msconfig' and press Enter. Switch to the Startup tab and uncheck Msmsgs, press Apply and OK.*



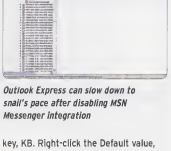
2 *To prevent Messenger integrating with IE, even when disabled, start regedit and navigate to HKEY_LOCAL_MACHINE\SOFTWARE\Microsoft\Internet Explorer\Extensions\ and right-click on the following key: {FB5F1910-F110-11d2-BB9E-00C04F7956B3}". Select Modify and add a minus sign (-) to the start of the key.*



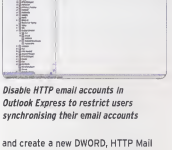
3 *To prevent Messenger running when OE is launched, start regedit and navigate to HKEY_LOCAL_MACHINE\SOFTWARE\Microsoft\Outlook Express. Click Edit/ New/ DWORD and name it Hide Messenger. Right-click and select modify and enter a value of '2'. Restart for the changes to take effect.*



Keep an eye on the SearchAssistant item to ensure browser hijackers aren't redirecting you to malicious websites



Outlook Express can slow down to snail's pace after disabling MSN Messenger integration



Disable HTTP email accounts in Outlook Express to restrict users synchronising their email accounts

can be changed to one of your own choice. Navigate to HKEY_LOCAL_MACHINE\SOFTWARE\Microsoft\Internet Explorer\Main and right-click the SearchBar String Value equal to the URL required.

Not all cleaning utilities target the search history found in the drop-down menu on the Google Toolbar. To remove the contents of this list, navigate to HKEY_CURRENT_USER\Software\Google\NavClient\1.1\History and delete the key.

If you want to access items on the Microsoft Knowledge Base quickly, Internet Explorer can be tweaked so you can type 'KB' followed by the article number, instead of typing the full URL. Navigate to HKEY_CURRENT_USER\Software\Microsoft\Internet Explorer\SearchUrl\ and create a new key, KB. Right-click the Default value, and modify it to 'http://support.microsoft.com/?kbid=%s'.

Outlook Express

You may find that Outlook Express slows down after disabling MSN Messenger integration. If this is the case, navigate to HKEY_LOCAL_MACHINE\SOFTWARE\Classes\CLSID\{FB7199AB-79BF-11d2-B094-0000F875C541} and delete the InProcServer32 and LocalServer 32sub-keys.

To increase security, you can block executable attachments in Outlook Express, reducing the risk of propagating viruses. Navigate to HKEY_LOCAL_MACHINE\SOFTWARE\Microsoft\Outlook Express and create a new DWORD, BlockExeAttachments, with a value of '1'.

To back up your Outlook Express Mail Rules, Blocked Sender Lists and other personal settings, navigate to HKEY_CURRENT_USER\Identities\{Identity}\Software\Microsoft\Outlook Express\5.0, click Registry/ Export/ and save it as a .reg file.

Outlook Express can be synchronised with some HTTP email accounts. If you'd prefer to disable this feature, navigate to HKEY_LOCAL_MACHINE\SOFTWARE\Microsoft\Outlook Express and create a new DWORD, HTTP Mail Enabled, with a value of '0'. To disable Hotmail only, create a DWORD, Disable Hotmail, with a value of '1'.

When stationery is uninstalled, it rarely removes itself from the list shown in Outlook Express. To remove the entries, navigate to HKEY_CURRENT_USER\Identities\{Identity}\Software\Microsoft\Outlook Express\5.0 and remove the values in Recent Stationery List and Recent Stationery Wide List.

Splash screens

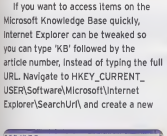
Remove the splash screens in Internet Explorer and Outlook Express. Navigate to HKEY_LOCAL_MACHINE\SOFTWARE\Policies\Microsoft\Internet Explorer\Infodelivery\Restrictions and create a new DWORD, NoSplash, with a value of '1'. Navigate to HKEY_CURRENT_USER\Identities\{Identity}\Software\Microsoft\Outlook Express\5.0 and create a new DWORD, NoSplash, with a value of '1'.

ISP branding

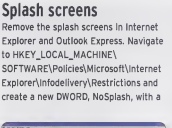
Most ISPs brand their versions of Internet Explorer and Outlook Express. Wanadoo is also renowned for adding an InfoPane in Outlook Express. To disable this, click View/ Layout and uncheck InfoPane, press Apply and OK. To remove the feature completely, navigate to HKEY_CURRENT_USER\Identities\{Identity}\SOFTWARE\Microsoft\Outlook Express\5.0 and delete the BodyBarPath value.

You can change the Window titles to anything you want by modifying the relevant Window Title string values. Navigate to: HKEY_CURRENT_USER\SOFTWARE\Microsoft\Internet Explorer\Main and HKEY_CURRENT_USER\SOFTWARE\Microsoft\Outlook Express to make the changes.

To remove the animated revolving logos, navigate to HKEY_CURRENT_USER\Software\Microsoft\Internet Explorer\Toolbar and delete the BrandBitmap, SmBrandBitmap, BigBitmap and SmallBitmap values. You also need to remove the BigBitmap and SmallBitmap values in HKEY_LOCAL_MACHINE\SSOFTWARE\Microsoft\Internet Explorer\Main.



Install HideOE from our coverdisc to minimise Outlook Express to the System Tray



Speed up the launch of Internet Explorer and Outlook Express by disabling the splash screens on startup

Next month's Registry workshop covers visual OS enhancements and will include using your own images as a background in Internet Explorer. We'll also reveal how to create an animated logo and configure the paths correctly using the bitmap values in the registry.

iTunes workshop

Organise your music collection, burn your own audio CDs and purchase tracks on line with the help of the mighty iTunes

Forget the stereo gathering dust in the corner of your living room because there's a new kid on the block. That's right; your PC is now the only music system you'll ever need. Not only does it give you high quality audio output but you can also use it to download music from the Internet and rip CDs. However, such convenience has a price and with so many tracks at your fingertips it won't take long for your hard disk to get overrun with digital music files. The solution to this dilemma comes in the form of iTunes, although you'll need to be using Windows XP or 2000 in order take advantage of this.

The iTunes program (**www.apple.com/uk/itunes**) enables you to organise and listen to music using your PC. As well as using it to play your CDs, you can add music to iTunes from a variety of sources. If you already have files stored on your PC you'll find it extremely versatile in that it can handle all major audio file formats. Create your own music library with playlists of your favourite songs or compilations. These can be sorted using categories such as genre or the artist's name. If you want to take any of your playlists with you then you can use the program to burn an audio CD or DVD. We'll explore all this and more in greater detail, including Internet radio and sharing your music, over the coming pages.

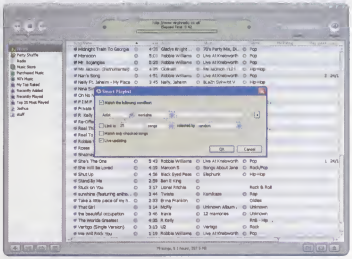
Simon Clark

iPod not required

Although iTunes was once the sole preserve of the Mac, the highly innovative digital jukebox is freely available to all PC users. Playing your favourite tunes and putting them in some kind of discernible order is nothing new for a media player, it's the additional program features that make iTunes worthy of note. First though we need to dispense with the common myth surrounding its relationship to the iPod. You can enjoy all that iTunes has to offer without owning an iPod. However, if you are lucky enough to own one of these portable music players then you'll be able to connect it to your PC and transfer audio tracks to it using the iTunes software, it's as simple as that.

Getting started

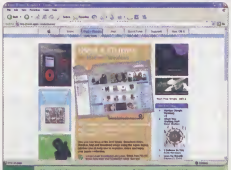
With the iTunes program installed you'll want to start adding your own music to the library as soon as possible. Importing tracks from a CD is a straightforward process. Insert a disc in the drive and after a few moments you'll see all the songs that are on the CD listed in the iTunes program window. Furthermore, if you're connected to the Internet at the time then full track details including the name of the artist will be displayed. Remove the tick from the check box against any of those songs you don't want to be included in the library. Click on the Import button to begin transferring the tracks to your hard disk. Once this has completed click on Library to see what's been imported. The files will be stored in c:\Documents and Settings*user*\My Documents\My Music\iTunes.



Create Smart Playlists based on wide ranging criteria such as year, rating, genre and last played.

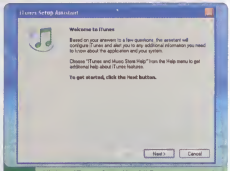
Existing files on your hard disk, including those you may have downloaded, won't automatically be recognised by iTunes. You'll need to import them using a different method so they are visible in the Library. Click on File/ Add File to Library and browse to the location where the files are stored. If you want to select multiple files then hold down the Ctrl key while you click the files you want one at a time.

Download and install iTunes



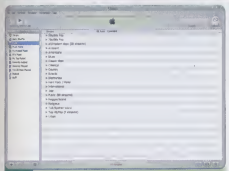
Step 1 *You'll find a free copy of iTunes for Windows on this month's second coverdisc, under the MP3 tools tab. Alternatively, you can download the program from* ***www.apple.com/uk/itunes****. Click on Free Download then Download iTunes to begin the process. The file is around 20MB.*

Step 2 *If you've downloaded the program double-click iTunesSetup.exe to begin installation. As you work your way through the wizard make sure that you leave iTunes as the default player for audio files. Click on Finish to complete the process, a restart won't be necessary.*



Step 3 *Click on iTunes from the All Programs menu to start using the program now. Use the iTunes Setup Assistant to help with configuration and to familarise yourself with the program. Deselect the option to go the iTunes Music Store; we'll look at that later.*

Listen to Internet radio stations

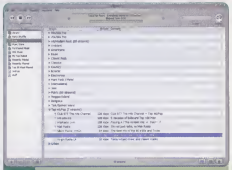


step 1

Along with downloading from the Internet, ripping CDs and purchasing from the Music Store there's another way of listening to music in iTunes. Click on Radio and you'll be able to listen to broadcasts that are streamed across the Internet.

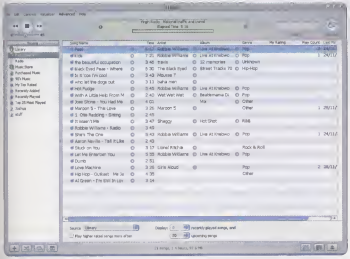
step 2

The streams are sorted into Genres and you can choose from the likes of Classical, Country, Pop and Rock. Double-click on a category and you'll see a list of available stations. There will be a selection of US- and UK-based streams.



step 3

Double-click a stream and start listening straight away. For example, choose Virgin Radio UK and the preview window will display details of the track that's currently being played. Use the Equalizer and volume controls in the same way you do for pre-recorded tracks.



Use Party Shuffle to play the contents of a playlist in a random order

Another way of helping you sort through the tracks in the Library is to assign them a rating. You'll be able to rate them between zero and five stars with your choice being displayed in the My Rating column. For example, if you decide to create Smart Playlist you can produce one based on only your highest rated songs. Alternatively, if your playlist is based upon a particular artist then you can limit your results so that only the songs by them you've rated highest will appear.

Playback time

You can listen to any of the songs you've imported into the iTunes Library. Select a track from the list and click on the Play button. The information window at the top will display the artist name and track title. Click anywhere in here and you'll be able to switch between total track time, time remaining and elapsed time.

To fine-tune your audio experience open the Equalizer window. The sliders are set to Flat by default but click on the drop-down box and you can make use predetermined settings which are sorted by music genre. It's worth taking the time to experiment with the Equalizer as your enjoyment of audio playback can be significantly improved by making adjustments. You'll find this particularly useful if you use both headphones and speakers to listen to your music. Click on Make Preset in the drop-down box to preserve manually adjusted settings for use again in the future. The slider on the far left labelled Preamp is another way of adjusting volume. For example, if a particular recording is somewhat quiet then use this to give the output a boost.

When playing a song, the next one that follows it in the list will be played automatically afterwards as long as its check box is ticked. At the bottom left of the program window you'll find settings that enable you to vary the order of play. Click the Shuffle button and all the songs in the current playlist will be played in a random order. The button alongside enables the playlist to be played either once or repeated or the current track can be repeated.

You may have more than one media player installed on your system, so, to ensure that iTunes is used when you double-click an audio file you can make it your default player. To do this, click Edit/ Preferences and check Use iTunes as the default player for audio files.

If you've created a playlist to be proud of then you can share it with other people by publishing it on the iTunes Music Store website as an iMix. Open iTunes, select Music Store then click on iMix. Here you'll be able to see examples of other people's mixes. To show off one of your own, select a playlist then click on the arrow along side and create an iMix. You'll need log in using your Apple ID to take advantage of this feature. If you don't have one you can register free at http://myinfo.apple.com.

Turn the Visualizer on for some special effects while your music is being played

Get to know iTunes

1 Preview window The preview window will display details of the track that's currently playing. Drag the progress bar if you want to skip forwards or backwards through the song.

2 Library The Music Library shows all the tracks you've imported. You can increase the amount of information that's displayed for each one by clicking Edit/ View Options.

3 Visualizer Click on Visualizer/ Turn Visualizer On and you'll be able to give your audio some impact. The shapes and patterns will change with the beat and rhythm of each song.

4 Music Store For high quality legal music, click here to be taken immediately to the Apple Music Store where you'll be able to purchase individual songs for just 79p.

5 Playlists Organise your music collection and create your own compilations. Use Smart Playlists and sort them automatically based on criteria such as genre, artist and rating.

6 Equalizer Fine tune your audio output with the help of the Equalizer. Make use of the predetermined settings or move the sliders until playback is to your taste.

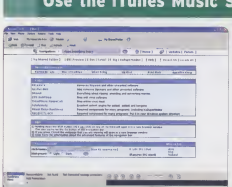
You may find that the music you import from Internet or audio CD doesn't appear as you would like in the program window. For example, the track title or artist name may be wrong or incomplete. This can lead to problems later when you try to create playlists and sort your songs. To edit the information for a particular track right click on it and choose Get info. The Summary tab will give you a run down of the current labels that are being used. If you want to change these then click on the Info tab. Here you'll be able to the name of the artist, the track title and the album name. You can also edit the track number and disc number if it's part of a set.

Creating playlists

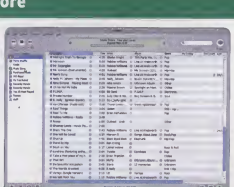
The ease with which music files can be imported and played in iTunes means it won't be long until your Library is awash with all manner of audio tracks. To make it easier to find what you want to listen to you can create your own playlists. These can consist of your own personal favourites or your choice of an artist's greatest hits. Adding a song to a playlist doesn't remove it from the Library altogether, a playlist simply consists of links to the main files in the Library. Click File/ New to create a playlist and then give it a name. Go back to the Library and choose which of your songs you'd like to be included. Click on a track then drag it across onto your playlist. To add multiple files hold down Ctrl then click on them one at a time. When they're all selected just drag them across. You can rearrange the order of the tracks in your playlist by dragging them up or down accordingly.

Another way to organise your songs is to use iTune's Smart Playlist capabilities. This feature is akin to a filtering system and will enable you to produce a playlist based on certain characteristics – for example, tracks of a particular genre, from a specific artist or those you have given the highest rating. Click File/ New Smart Playlist and in the dialog box check Match the following condition. The first drop-down box contains a huge number of key search categories such as Album, Artist, Year and Last Played. Then it's simply a case of entering appropriate keywords. Here you'll also be able to tailor the playlist in a number of different ways including restricting the amount of songs that appear in the playlist and limiting the amount of disk space that's used.

Use the iTunes Music Store



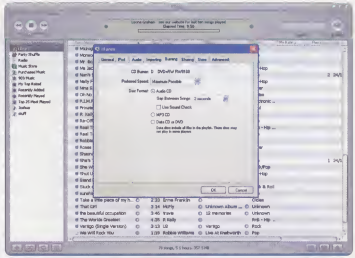
1 *While it's possible to download music for free from the internet, it's illegal unless specifically allowed by the copyright holder. Furthermore, you may be limited by the choice available not to mention the fact that audio quality can sometimes be poor.*



2 *Apple's online Music Store is accessible through iTunes and you'll be able to browse through available tracks and listen to a 30 second preview before deciding whether or not to purchase a track. Each track costs 79p, it's legal and the quality is guaranteed.*

3 *Make sure you're connected to the internet and click on Music Store. On the initial page you'll see details of download charts, all the latest releases together with a selection of recordings that are available exclusively from the iTunes Music Store.*

Choose exactly how much information about your music is displayed in iTunes



Create your own playlists and then burn them to create your own audio CDs

Click on Party Shuffle and you'll be able to create playlists on the fly. Go down to the source drop-down box and you can choose where you would like the tracks taken from. The Party Shuffle mode will play songs in a random order but you can get a sneak preview of what's coming up by increasing the number alongside Upcoming songs.

Program settings

You can take full control over the way iTunes works by clicking Edit/ Preferences. Under the General tab you'll see settings that determine different aspects of the program display. For example, you can increase the size of the text to make track titles easier to read. You can also choose whether or not to show the links to Party Shuffle and Radio. You're able to listen to CDs with iTunes and by clicking on the drop-down box next to On CD Insert it's possible to configure how the program will behave. Select one of the four options to either Show Songs, Begin Playing, Import Songs or Import Songs and Eject (the disc).

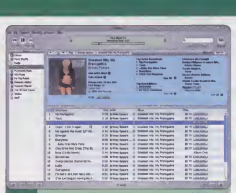
Switch between the various tabs in Preferences in order to fine-tune program configuration. If you Import music tracks into iTunes from a variety of sources then you'll notice that the playback volume for your tracks can vary somewhat. To save you adjusting the volume all the time you can select the Sound Check option under the Audio tab. The same option can be applied under the Burning tab. Select Use Sound Check for when you're burning CDs from your playlists. Under the Advanced tab you'll be able to choose the location where you want the iTunes music folder to be stored. You can also select options that will enable you to automatically organise the music that you import.

While ripping CDs and downloading music from the Internet you're likely to find that you have one or more copies of the same song in the library. To help you find duplicates you can click on the column headings in the Library and sort tracks by Song Name, Artist and Album. If you're still having trouble you can click on Edit/ Show Duplicate Songs. Then you can right click on the song and choose Clear to remove it from the Library. If you want to delete it from your hard disk then you'll need to do this manually through My Computer.

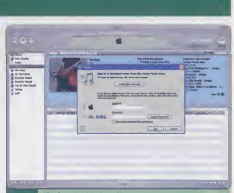
Burning CDs

With the help of your CD writer, you can use iTunes to create your own audio CDs from the various songs that have been imported into the program. You can select an existing playlist or create a new one especially for burning. To burn a CD using a current playlist, first select it then click on Burn Disc. Insert a blank disc in the drive and click on Burn Disc again. If your playlist contains a large number of songs that won't fit on a single disc then after the first disc is full you'll be prompted to insert another in order to continue. It's worth noting that if your playlist contains any songs purchased from the iTunes Music store then you can only burn this playlist seven times. Use the options under the Burning tab of Preferences to set the conditions for the burning of audio discs, including record speed and the gap used between tracks.

step 4 *If the track you want to purchase is on the homepage then click on the link. If you just want to browse then click on Genre and search through the listings. Alternatively, click on Power Search if you're trying to locate a specific track.*



step 5 *Once you've located the song you want to purchase, highlight it in iTunes, click on the Play button and you'll be able to hear a 30 second preview. It's possible to do this with any of the thousands of songs that are available in the Music Store.*



step 6 *Having decided on the song or songs you want click on Buy Song. You'll need to log in with your Apple ID and create an account for use in the store. With you're account created, click on Buy Song against any track to download it to iTunes.*

Professional help

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AARON BIRCH

- Digital video
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- PC gaming

IAIN WARDE

- Utility software
- Networking
- Internet & email

Printing from DOS

486 Pentium (normally used in DOS 6.2 to run emulators)

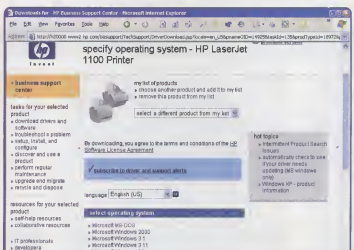
Printers used to be usable with anything, but now some rely on Windows to drive them, which I understand makes them cheaper. No one tells you if a printer is Windows only, so how can I tell?

I use several emulators (Amstrad, ZBO generic, and so on), to run old programs and want to buy a laser printer that I can be sure will work for them all. Other magazines imply (I don't believe it) that any printer with a parallel connection is standalone for want of a better name. Others say to look for a 'Not GDI' feature. Adverts and reviews, however, never tell you any of this. I dare not assume a dearer printer must be OK. Is there any way to be sure? I do not want to try at random and keep taking it back.

John Butler

A PC's USB ports only work in Windows, so if a printer provides only a USB connection then it is safe to assume that it won't work in DOS. It may work when running DOS in a window in Windows, but it is best to stick to parallel port printers to be safe. There is no simple way of telling whether a printer will work if you boot straight to DOS and run an old DOS program, apart from checking the manufacturer's website to see if there is a DOS driver.

If you go to the HP website and search for drivers, you will discover that printers like the LaserJet 1100 have drivers for every version of Windows from 3.1 to XP and for MS-DOS too. It will work with any operating system produced in the last 15 years, but not all printers are as well supported. You should also check out a utility called DOSPRN from **www.dosprn.com**, which enables old DOS software to use modern laser and inkjet printers.



If you have an old operating system, make sure that there is a driver for the printer before you buy it

Stuck in the drive

Intel Celeron 996MHz, 10GB hard drive, 248MB RAM, Windows XP Home Edition with Service Pack 1

MY PC's CD-ROM drive has failed, so I connected a Freecom FS-1 Combo TEAC DW-224E-A CD-ROM via USB. This works correctly, but when I try to remove the CD by pressing the button on the front of the box, the action is refused. I have found I can succeed by first disconnecting the USB cable then replacing it. Is there some action possible other than disconnecting the USB cable?

Ian Plzer

A disc cannot be ejected if it is still in use, so you should shut down any programs that have accessed it. For example, Windows or CD-writing software might detect a CD-R or CD-RW and enable it for reading or writing. CDs can be ejected not only by pressing the button on the front of the drive unit, but also from within Windows. Click Start/ My Computer, then right click the CD-ROM drive and select Eject.

When USB storage devices are used with Windows, an icon is added to the notification area of the Taskbar. Right-click the icon and select Safely Remove Hardware. Select the drive in the list of devices and click the Stop button. After a few seconds, you should be able to remove the disc.

Unrecognised boot disk

No details provided

I need to get onto MS-DOS to restore my PC, only my system refuses to recognise my boot disk. It is possible to bypass the startup files, isn't it? I have done it before, I think, by holding Alt+2, or Shift+$. Can this be done, or is there another way round it? Windows will not start and although a restore point was set, the Recovery Console is inactive and just goes onto a blank screen. Can you help?

Danny McGuinness

To boot XP from a floppy, download the disks from ***http://support.microsoft.com/default.aspx?scid=kb;en-us;310994***

It would be useful to know which version of Windows you are running. It sounds like you have a recent PC running XP because the Recovery Console was not in Windows 95/98/Me. Most modern PCs are not configured to boot from a floppy disk and this might be the reason why the boot disk is not being recognised. You need to enter the BIOS and set the boot device.

Switch on the computer and press the F1, F2 or Del key (it is usually one of these) a few times to enter the BIOS configuration utility. If you tap the key at just the right time, a screen full of settings appears with a menu to enable you to access further screens. Go through each one looking for the boot device or boot order setting. Change it so that the first boot device is floppy disk A: and the second is hard disk C:. Save the settings and exit the BIOS configuration utility. You can now boot with a floppy disk.

> "If you tap the key at just the right time, a screen full of settings appears with a menu to enable you to access further screens"

If you have a Windows XP CD, you can boot from it and either re-install Windows on top of itself to repair any corrupt files, or enter the Recovery Console to fix it using the command prompt tools. In the BIOS configuration utility, just set the first boot device to D: or CD-ROM drive. After fixing your PC, you can leave the boot order as it is, but the PC will start a bit faster if the hard disk is the first boot device.

Expired updates

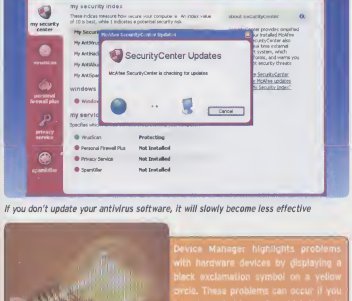
No details provided

I had McAfee VirusScan and Personal Firewall Plus, which expired on 22 October. I bought McAfee Security Suite 6 on 22 June and installed it and it worked OK. However, on 22 October, when my old McAfee product expired, it knocked off my Security Suite as well. Three weeks later, I still cannot update my virus protection. It appears that my account shows my subscription to have expired and I cannot download an update.

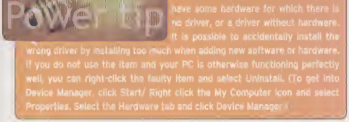
After a large number of emails and telephone calls, McAfee tells me it has cancelled my old subscription and that I need to remove the software from my PC. I have not been able to do that and paid £45 to have the uninstall carried out, yet when I go into the McAfee website and my account, it still shows it exists. I can't use tech chat as this is not available if your subscription requires renewing. This is not the case, but it still stops me getting technical assistance.

Perhaps you can advise others that installing another McAfee product on top of an old one causing this problem. In the meantime I am operating an antivirus which is well out of date. Any advice would be appreciated.

Thomas Rae



If you don't update your antivirus software, it will slowly become less effective



Annoyances

www.annoyances.org

There is a well known series of Annoyances books, such as Windows XP Annoyances, Windows Me Annoyances and so on. This website is a companion to the books and while it does not contain many extracts from the books, there is still a lot of useful information to be found.

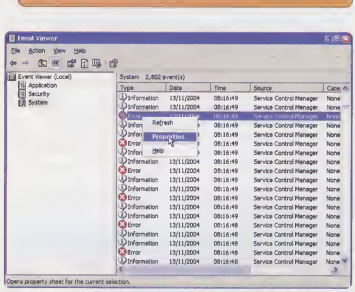
The topics covered on the site include using Windows, customising, networking, performance, troubleshooting and many more. Select one of the sections and a long list of links to items is displayed. In some sections, like Customizing, these are mostly tips and techniques, with a few problems and solutions. In other sections, such as Troubleshooting, most of the links are to solutions to common problems faced by Windows users.

In addition to the tips and solutions, there is a discussion forum for each version of Windows. The most popular forum is Windows XP and there are 9,667 pages of postings. You can browse the messages or use the search facility to find a particular topic.

There are so many postings that no matter what your problem is, someone has probably already posted it and someone else has provided the solution. It is an excellent source of information.

Does Windows drive you mad? Don't lose your temper, head for the Windows Annoyances site

Some problems in Outlook Express are caused by corrupt files that store email messages. Starting problems, quitting problems, memory problems and more – they are all caused by damaged data files. You can simply delete them to cure the fault, although this does wipe out all your old emails. Click Start/ Search and enter *.dbx. Delete the files that are found. Windows XP creates different files for each user, so take care not to delete the files belonging to other accounts. The owners would be mighty upset if they lost all their messages.



Right-click an error entry in the system event log to see what the problem was caused by

probably do the trick. You could then install the program and register it again as a new user.

Slow startup

Packard Bell I Media 5053, Celeron 2.0GHz, 256MB RAM, 40GB hard drive, Tiscali broadband, Windows XP Home Edition with Service Pack 1

When I click launch Outlook Express, it takes three to four minutes to start up, which seems a very long time. I have downloaded Internet Explorer to see if that might fix the problem, but no joy. I downloaded all the updates and Service Pack 1, but still no improvement. I tried Microsoft, but the only fault I found regarding start up times was for version 5 and I have version 6.
Janine

Outlook Express can be configured to use Hotmail and if this is the default account, it takes longer to start the program because it must connect to the Hotmail website and download your Inbox. However, it should not take several minutes.

> "Messenger can be very irritating and people often disable it or remove it completely"

There is a known issue with Messenger that causes Outlook Express to start very slowly. Messenger can be very irritating and people often disable it or remove it completely. For some strange reason, on some computers, this affects Outlook Express startup. There will probably be an entry in the system error log stating that "(FB7199AB-79BF-11D2-B094-0000F875C541) did not register with DCOM within the required timeout." To see the system error log, go to the Control Panel and in Classic View, double-click Administrative Tools. Double-click Event Viewer and then select System in the list. Double-click an entry to read it.

To resolve the problem, click Start/ Run and enter 'regedit' to start the Windows Registry Editor. Select Edit/ Find and enter (FB7199AB-79BF-11D2-B094-0000F875C541) into the Find What box. Look below this for the InProcServer32 and LocalServer32 keys and set the default values to nothing, just an empty string. Quit the registry editor and restart Windows. Outlook Express should now start very quickly.

Out of memory

DFI motherboard, Pentium 4 3.2GHz, 512MB RAM, 3x 160GB hard disks, Windows 98

When I click the right mouse button anywhere on the screen it, takes about two minutes for the menu to pop up. It never did this before, so it must be a program I installed. How can I fix it and where in the registry can I add an item to the right-mouse button menu?

My DFI motherboard can take up to 4GB of memory, but recently I keep getting errors stating: "Insufficient

DVD disaster

I have just installed an NEC ND-2500A DVD/CD writer, which went smoothly with no hitches, but when I go to watch a DVD via Windows Media Player 9, it states that I need a compatible decoder. Please could you advise me on what to do now? Is there any software I can buy or better still, download for free?
Richard Carr

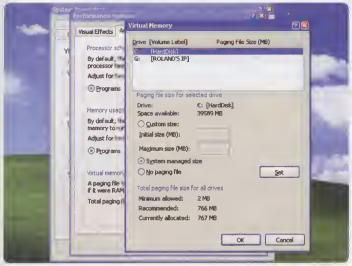
Installing a DVD-ROM drive will enable you to read DVD discs containing software, photos, .zip files, and other computer data, but it is not sufficient to enable your computer to play DVD movies. A DVD movie disc contains highly compressed video in a special format and you need the right software to decompress it so that you can watch it. Windows Media Player is reporting that you do not have any suitable software.

Although Windows Media Player is capable of playing DVD movie discs, Windows XP doesn't come with the codecs required. You can purchase relevant DVD decoding software from the Microsoft site, though. Go to **www.microsoft.com/windows/windowsmedia/windowsxp/buypacks.aspx**. There are four decoders available – from CyberLink, InterVideo, Nvidia and SONIC – so click the Buy link for whichever one you want. The CyberLink and InterVideo versions cost just US$14.95, whilst the Nvidia and SONIC versions are US$19.95.

You are better off buying a DVD player utility because even if you get a decoder, Windows Media Player is not that good at playing DVDs. CyberLink (**www.gocyberlink.com**) and InterVideo (**www.intervideo.com**) are the two main suppliers of DVD players and their software is excellent.

Alternatively, you could give the freeware tool, VLC Media Player (**www.videolan.org/vlc/**) a try. This program may not be up to the standard of the commercial alternatives but it can play a range of audio and media file types including DVD movies.

Watching DVD movies on your computer is great fun, but you need a program like Cyberlink PowerDVD



No matter how much memory you have, do not disable the page file because programs need it

memory to run this program." That was when I had 2 x 512MB chips in (DDR 400). Now it only works with one chip in. It can't be the motherboard or the chips, so what the heck is it? I have plenty of room on my 3x 160GB SATA hard drives.
Graham Garven

The context menu that appears when you click the right mouse button depends on what is underneath it at the time. If a program is running, then it provides its own menu, but in the absence of any software, the menu is displayed by the Explorer shell. Right-clicking the desktop is different to clicking in an Explorer window though and it produces a different menu.

The Explorer context menu can be customised in two different ways. The simplest is to add new targets to the Send To menu or to remove them. Double-click My Computer, double-click the hard disk drive and go to the Windows folder. Look for the SendTo folder. You can add shortcuts to programs here, and when you right-click a file and select Send To, you can select the program on the menu. For example, find Notepad.exe in the Windows folder and select Edit/ Copy. Return to the SendTo folder and select Edit/ Paste Shortcut. A shortcut to Notepad appears. You can now load any file into Notepad by right clicking it and selecting it on the Send To menu.

A program can add extra features to the right-click menu and this may be what is causing the problem. Take a look at the menus and see what software they refer to. Some programs let you specify whether extensions appear on the right-click Explorer menu and so you can remove the offending items. Other programs require a complete uninstall.

If all else fails, you can simply hack the items out of the registry, but try the other solutions first. Click Start/ Run and enter 'regedit'. Go to HKEY_CLASSES_ROOT\Directory\shell and look at the sub-keys. These are the extensions. Select any item you don't want and delete it. The context menu is dependent on the item under the mouse and there are more extensions elsewhere. Go to HKEY_CLASSES_ROOT\Folder\shell and check out the sub-keys. Delete any items that you do not want on the context menu.

In answer to your other question, you should test the memory in the computer just to make sure that it is functioning properly because you cannot rule out a hardware problem so easily. A utility called Doc Memory is available from **www.slmmtester.com**. You have to register, but this is free. Memtest86 from **www.memtest86.com** is an alternative. It is also free and you can create a bootable floppy or CD that starts up the memory tester. Memtest from **http://hcldesign.com/memtest/** is a Windows-based tester. It is simpler, but it cannot test memory that is being used by Windows, so it's not as effective.

It might seem strange, but older versions of Windows can experience problems when large amounts of memory are installed. Various problems occur depending on the version of Windows and what software you are running. Windows XP copes much better with 1GB of RAM than Windows 95, 98 or Me.

With 1GB of memory, you might be tempted to turn off the Windows page file. Hardly any applications will use all of the memory and the page file should not be needed, but some applications attempt to write to it when they start up. When this fails, they stop with an error message. If you have disabled the page file, you should enable it again.

You don't say whether the memory error message occurs with one program or every program and if it is just one, then the program may be corrupted. Uninstall it and re-install it.

> "It might seem strange, but older versions of Windows can experience problems when large amounts of memory are installed"

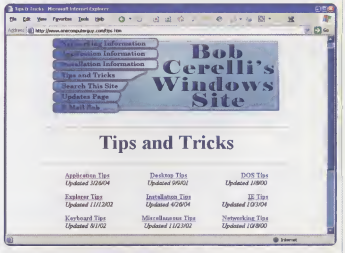
Bob Cerelli's Windows Site

www.oneco#puterguy.com/tips.htm

We have no idea who Bob Cerelli is, but his website is a great source of information and tips for Windows and Microsoft Office software. There are 15 different sections and these include application tips, Explorer tips, Windows 98 tips, Windows XP tips and even DOS tips. In fact, many of the tips on this site are quite old, so if you are still running Windows 98 or some other old operating system, you can find lots of useful information here. Do not be put off if you have Windows XP though, because the XP tips section is one of the largest.

Although each section has the word tips in the title, the site is not exclusively dedicated to tips and there are lots of common problems and their solutions too. There are virtually no images on the site and it is nearly all text, so visually it is quite dull. There is very little structure to the site too and each section is a single page containing all the tips. If you were to print out the Windows XP Tips page, you would need 52 pages of A4 paper! Now that is a lot of tips, problems and solutions.

A search facility would be useful, but because everything in a section is on one page, you can use Internet Explorer's Find function to locate whatever you are interested in.



Bob has built up a large collection of tips and other useful information on his website

Add-in errors

No details provided

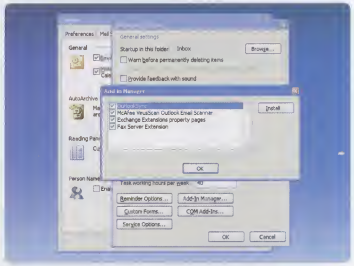
After installing Microsoft Office XP Professional, whenever I start up Microsoft Outlook I get two error messages: "The add-in c:\Program Files\Steganos Security Suite 5\seeop.dll and c:\Program Files\Panda Software\Panda Antivirus Platinum\PAV could not be installed or loaded."

Both programs have been uninstalled using the XP uninstaller, however, Panda Antivirus still shows up on the Add or Remove programs screen. I have tried uninstalling and then re-installing Office XP, but the

messages still keep appearing. How do I remove the Panda Antivirus reference on the Add or Remove Programs screen and how do I remove the add-ins for Steganos 5 and Panda Antivirus in Microsoft Outlook? This problem is really becoming irritating.
Mike Tomlinson

The Outlook add-ins enable the antivirus software to scan incoming and outgoing emails, so we hope you have replaced these programs with a similar utility, otherwise you risk being infected. Removing the add-ins from Outlook is quite easy. Select Tools/ Options and click the Other tab. Click the Advanced Options button in the General section and down near the bottom of the dialog is Add-in Manager. Click this and in the next dialog, clear the ticks against anything you don't want loaded with Outlook. Click the OK button on each dialog to close it.

When programs are uninstalled, they occasionally leave traces behind and an entry is left in the Add or Remove Programs list. It is annoying, but fortunately, it is not too difficult to remove. The information is stored in the registry, so click Start/ Run and enter 'regedit'. In the left-hand pane, navigate to HKEY_LOCAL_MACHINE\ SOFTWARE\Microsoft\Windows\Current Version\Uninstall and look for the key corresponding to the item you want to remove – Panda Antivirus in your case. If you cannot see it, select every key and on the right, look at the value of DisplayName on the right. This shows the name that appears in the Add or Remove Programs list. When you find the right key, just delete it.



Add-ins provide Outlook with additional functions. Disable any that you do not need in this dialog

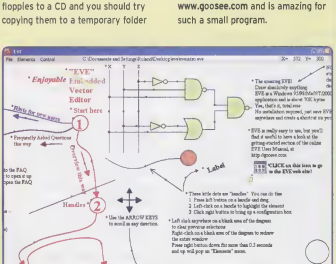
Drawing inspiration

I need to install AmiPro onto my laptop, which only has CD facilities, but AmiPro is on 13 floppies. I use the drawing tool in AmiPro to create sketch plans of accident scenes. Can you advise me of a freeware program that would transfer all 13 floppies onto a CD so AmiPro would install correctly onto my laptop? If this is not feasible, are do you know of a simple drawing program that will enable me to draw sketch plans?
Neil L Longsden

If you need to access floppy disks on a laptop that does not have an internal drive, you can use a USB model instead. Simply Computers (**www.simply.co.uk**) has an external USB floppy disk drive for £16.99.

There isn't a utility for transferring floppies to a CD and you should try copying them to a temporary folder on the hard disk drive and then writing them to a CD. A good CD writer is DeepBurner and both free and Professional versions can be found at **www.deepburner.com.** If the AmiPro installer is intelligent, it will realise that it is running from CD and has all the files it needs. This does not work with all software and sometimes you can only get it to install if you create folders called Disk1, Disk2 and so on. Copy the contents of each floppy to the appropriate folder and write them all to a CD. Just run setup.exe in the Disk1 folder.

If you want a simple and lightweight sketching program for drawing accident scenes, take a look at Eve. This program is only 74KB, it does not need installing, and yet it has a good selection of vector drawing tools. It is free from **www.goosee.com** and is amazing for such a small program.



If you need to draw diagrams and flow charts, Eve is a simple freeware tool that can do the job

Downgrading an upgrade

No details provided

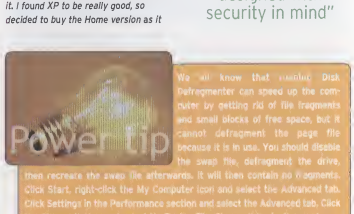
Having used Windows Me for some time, I wondered about the benefits of upgrading to XP. I borrowed a copy of Windows XP Professional from a friend and installed it. I found XP to be really good, so decided to buy the Home version as it did all I wanted and I couldn't justify the Pro version. I installed Home and deleted XP Pro, (registering the legitimate one).

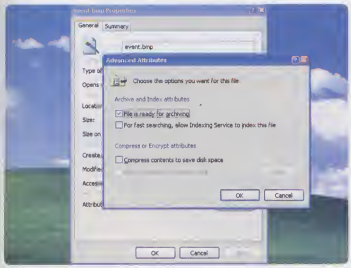
The problem is that the user I created in the Pro version with a password does not appear in the Home one, and when I try to access the folder, it says that it is not accessible and "Access is denied." When I look at the properties, it says that there are no files or folders and the size is 0 bytes.

There are a couple of files in a folder called Col I would like to access, but more importantly, there are some large video files in the folder that I was playing around with editing and whilst I don't want these, they are taking up about 20GB, so I would like to remove them.

I can't access, rename or delete the folder. I have tried going to DOS (or the latest equivalent), and if I use the 'dir'

"XP is derived from Windows NT and this operating system is designed with security in mind"





The Encrypt option at the bottom of this dialog is disabled in XP Home, but not in the Professional version

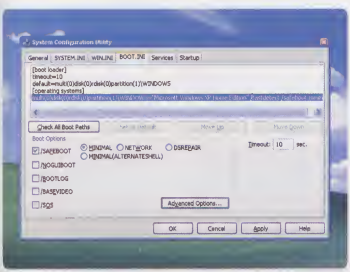
command, the directory appears. If I try the 'cd col' command it says "Invalid Directory." If I try 'attrib -r col', it says "Access Denied." I tried the suggestion from Issue 48 (Users won't go), but none of these worked. I also tried re-installing Windows XP Professional; again, but that didn't work.
Colin Fisher

When upgrading from Windows 98 or Me, the security in XP can catch people out because their old operating system never had any. Anyone could do anything in Windows 98/Me, but things are different in XP.

XP is derived from Windows NT and this operating system is designed with security in mind. After creating a password-protected account, it will try its hardest to prevent you from ever accessing its contents or even seeing the files or folders it contains. It is not surprising that you have not been able to gain access to the files. You cannot access it from another account because It is designed to prevent you. Even if you re-install the Pro version and create an identical account with the same username and password, it will still block you.

A possible solution to your problem is to use a flaw that was discovered in the original version of Windows XP. It is quite well known, so we are not divulging any secrets and besides, It is important that companies know that data in XP is not as secure as they might think. If you use a Windows 2000 boot CD to boot up to the Recovery Console, you have unrestricted access to the folders and files on the hard disk drive. They can be copied, moved or deleted without restriction and it does not matter whose account they belong to. If you don't know anyone with a Windows 2000 boot disk that you can borrow, try the boot disks at **www.bootdisk.com**. All versions of Windows are available, including 2000.

In addition to password protecting accounts so that personal folders cannot be accessed by unauthorised users, Windows XP Professional is able to encrypt files too. If the files you want to access are encrypted, then there isn't much you can do and you might as well delete them.



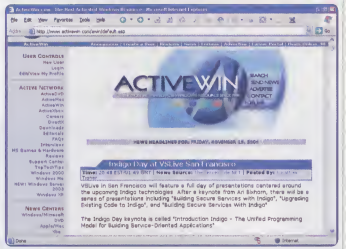
Startup options stored in the Boot.ini file can be configured using the System Configuration Utility

ActiveWin

www.activewin.com

ActiveWin is a large website that covers a multitude of topics and there's everything from careers to reviews of hardware and software. There is a long list of sections that you can access from the menu on the left-hand side of the homepage. One of the first you might want to visit is Top Tech Tips. There are subsections for Windows, Internet browsers, Office and miscellaneous. Choose Windows and you can select anything from 95 to XP. The list of tips is not as long as on some sites, but they are useful nevertheless.

The support section might be your next port of call, but this is a bit disappointing and there are simply a few links to Microsoft support. However, there is also a link to ActiveWin's forums. These forums are not exclusively PC and some are dedicated to the Xbox and Mac. However, there are forums for Windows XP, 95/98/98SE/Me, Internet Explorer, Bug Reports, Office, Tips and Tricks, MSN Messenger and Games. The total number of postings in these sites is over 10,000 and Windows XP has the lion's share with over 7,000. If you have a problem, you can post it here and see if anyone can come up with a solution. A search facility enables you to track down information in the forums. quickly and easily.



ActiveWin contains news, articles, tips, and a wide range of active discussion forums

Not safe

Windows XP Home Edition, AMI BIOS on Columbia II motherboard (NEC)

For some reason I find myself unable to boot into Safe Mode, and pressing F8 at the appropriate time just produces a box that enables the boot order to be chosen. I have browsed around in the BIOS and, unable to find anything specific, set everything to default with no success. This problem has only surfaced after I replaced the OEM's installation of Windows (accessible from a recovery floppy), with an installation from a proper Windows CD. Previously, pressing F8 had the desired and expected effect.

Could this be a software problem? I recently installed PowerQuest's Drive Image and this requires boot floppies to be created to allow booting into the program's own recovery environment. Could it be that I've turned off Safe Mode somehow? I realise it is not a hugely important issue, unless something goes wrong, but it is really irritating.
Tess Yoxall

"It sounds like something has taken over control of the F8 key and is capturing the key press so that Windows does not see it"

It is nothing to do with PowerQuest's Drive Image and the cause of the problem is probably a feature of the BIOS or the hard disk drive. It sounds like something has taken over control of the F8 key and is capturing the key press so that Windows does not see it. Is the boot order screen appearing before Windows has started to load? If this is the case, you may be pressing F8 too soon. You should try pressing it just after Windows starts and not before.

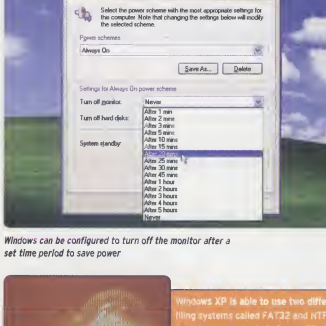
If the BIOS is intercepting the key press and prompting for the boot order, you should enter the BIOS configuration utility and look for the setting. When using a large hard disk in an old PC, a utility is installed to circumvent the limitations in the BIOS and it might provide a key to enable you to boot from an alternative device, such as a floppy disk.

One method of entering Safe Mode is to use the Windows System Configuration Utility. Select Start/ Run and enter 'msconfig'. Select the BOOT.INI tab and tick the /SAFEBOOT option. You can then choose either minimal or network, depending on whether you want networking loaded.

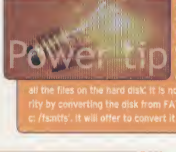
Music, but no monitor

AMD Athlon 2400+, Soltek SL-KT6DD-C1L motherboard, 256MB RAM, Windows XP Home Edition

Once my PC is powered up, the monitor goes off after couple of minutes' use, but if there is a music CD in the CD-ROM drive, music continues to play, which means the PC is still on even though there is nothing on the monitor. I have tried various things and it is not the monitor at fault, as when it is used on another computer, it works fine. The PC was purchased recently, so I will take it back it back to the shop to make use of their technical support service. However, I was wondering if you have come across the same problem before?
Elvir Kesedic



Windows can be configured to turn off the monitor after a set time period to save power



Windows XP is able to use two different filing systems called FAT32 and NTFS. If you have upgraded from Windows 98/Me, or if you have a small hard disk drive, you might still have FAT32. It is not as secure and anyone with a boot disk can start the computer and access all the files on the hard disk. It is not so easy with NTFS, so boost the security by converting the disk from FAT32. Click Start/ Run and enter 'convert c: /fsntfs'. It will offer to convert it the next time you start Windows.

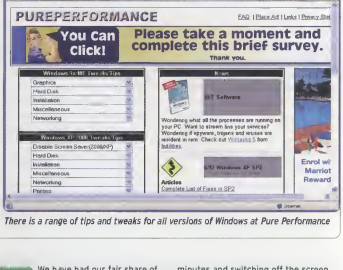
Pure Performance

www.pureperformance.com

This website is not as large or as comprehensive as some, but it is a useful site to have on your internet Explorer Favorites menu. On the homepages are some news links and when we visited, there were several links to articles about Windows XP Service Pack 2, such as a list of fixes, preparing for SP2, and setting up SP2. There were also links to the latest DirectX, Nvidia and Office updates. They are all essential for keeping your computer running smoothly.

There's a section of the site dedicated to Windows 95/98/ME tweaks and tips, and another section for Windows XP/2000 users. Drop-down lists provide access to tips on graphics, the hard disk drive, installation, networking, printing, and so on. There isn't a huge number of tips and tweaks, but it is worth spending an hour or two browsing around and reading through the advice because you might pick up some useful pointers.

When a tip or tweak is displayed, you can see the difficulty level and the time required to apply it. There are links to other sites providing more information or software downloads, a screen shot, and optimisation benefit rating. There is bound to be more than a few items that grab your interest, so take a look around.



There is a range of tips and tweaks for all versions of Windows at Pure Performance

We have had our fair share of monitor problems and when a problem occurs, it can be hard to tell whether it really is the monitor that is faulty, or whether the defect is within the computer. Trying it with another computer was a good course of action and this confirms that it is OK. It must therefore be something to do with the PC.

The problem could be something to do with Windows or it might be a fault on the video card. Windows is capable of turning off the display, so you should check the relevant settings to eliminate it as the cause of the fault. Right-click anywhere on the desktop and select Properties. Go to the screensaver tab and set it to None. A screensaver, such as the one called Blank, could be kicking in after a few minutes and switching off the screen, so make sure it's not the cause of the problem. Click the Power button and in the Power Options Properties dialog, set Turn Off Monitor to Never in the drop-down list.

If it is not the monitor causing the problem and it is not Windows that is turning off the display, we can only assume that there is a fault with the video card. With such a new PC, it is always best to contact the supplier.

Digitising the Jubilee

AMD Athlon XP 2.0GHz, Micro-star MS-6777 motherboard, Time system, 512MB RAM, Nvidia GeForce4 MX

If you want to capture video from a digital camcorder, you need a FireWire port

I have some video footage which was taken of the Queen's Jubilee back in 1977 on a Cinedome camera (8mm I think). Since VHS video recorders became popular, I have had it transferred onto a standard video tape. Is it possible to convert it into a digital format so it can be copied onto CDs? If so, what do I need? I have since purchased a Sony TRV 265E camcorder, from which you can upload digital data, but am unsure what else I need to go down this road. Do I need a video capture card installed on the computer? I have listed the spec of my machine above, and am looking forward to your reply.
Trevor Reddall

The Sony camcorder has digital video input and output capabilities and it can connect to a computer using a FireWire connection. FireWire sockets are common on new computers with a high specification, but they are a fairly recent addition and any PC more than a year or two old will not have them. However, FireWire is easy to add and not too expensive. You just need a plug-in PCI card. Most camcorders come with a connecting lead, but you can buy them from your camera store or PC store.

After connecting the camcorder to the computer, you can use video editing software to capture the video and save it to the hard disk drive. Since you need both a FireWire card and video editor, you should look for a bundle containing both because it usually saves a bit of money. For example, the Trust FireWire PCI card from **www.dabs.com** costs £22.99 and comes with Ulead Video Studio 5.

With a video editor and FireWire

> "FireWire is easy to add and not too expensive. You just need a plug-in PCI card"

card, you can capture video from the camcorder. The Sony TRV 265E has an S-Video analog video input socket and audio input, so with the right connecting leads (from a camera store if you do not have any), you can connect the output from a VHS video recorder to the input of the camcorder. You can either record the input on the camcorder and then play it back, recording it on the PC, or you can record straight from the video recorder to the PC because the Sony passes the analog video straight through.

Live Update is dead

No details provided

I have been using Norton Internet Security for a number of years and have been quite happy with the software, until I purchased and installed the 2004 version. At first it seemed to work OK but after a few months I started having problems. The first problem prevented me from downloading the updates and I keep getting error messages LU1806 and LU1821. Each time I followed the instructions posted in the knowledge base on the Symantec website. This seemed to correct the problem for a while but several weeks later the same thing happened again. Eventually the only way I could get my software working again was to uninstall and reinstall the software.

A few weeks later I encountered another problem. This time I got the LU1812 error, which prevented the software from downloading and installing Symantec Rediector Updates. Although I tried to solve the problem following instructions on Symantec's website, the only way I could finally resolve the problem was to yet again uninstall and reinstall the software.

When I telephoned Symantec Technical Support they said there are no problems with the software, which I find rather hard to believe. They also told me that If I cannot resolve the problem by following their instructions then the only thing I can do is to uninstall and reinstall all my Symantec Software, but this takes a long time and is not really a solution.

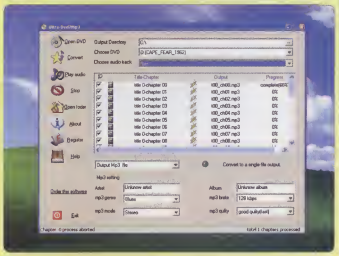
At first I thought that the problem may be with my computer but having spoken with friends who also use Norton Internet Security 2004 it seems they to have been having the same problem. I am now considering buying another brand of Internet Security. Can you shed any light on why Norton

DVD audio player

Please could you tell me what the DVD equivalent to the .mp3 format is? Could you advise me on a good but easy-to-use program to convert DVDs to and from .mp3 format?
Alan Latchem

There are two types of DVD discs, DVD video and DVD audio. They are quite different and while there are several utilities available that will extract the audio track from a DVD movie, the situation is different with DVD audio. To extract a DVD movie audio track and save directly to .mp3, you could use DVD to MP3 from Orion Studios (**www.orionstudios.com**). A trial version is available for download and you can register it for just US$24.99. A similarly priced shareware program is Ultra-DVD2MP3 from **www.mp3towav.org/ ultra-dvd2mp3/** and this is a combined DVD audio player and converter. Pop a DVD movie disc in the drive and it will list the chapters and offer to convert the audio to .mp3.

DVD audio discs are a different kettle of fish and there are competing standards. A DVD audio disc uses a very high quality audio standard called PCM, but there are optional components, such as Dolby Digital, MPEG audio, and DTS, to make them compatible with DVD video discs. Sony and Philips have their own high quality audio format called SACD, which uses DVD discs and SACD audio playing is a feature of their DVD players. Creative provides one of the few DVD audio players. It is called MediaSource and is available for its SoundBlaster Audigy 2 ZS sound card. It rips CD audio, but not DVD audio. For more information, go to **www.soundblaster.com/mediasource.**



Extracting the audio tracks from DVD movies is straightforward with Ultra-DVD2MP3

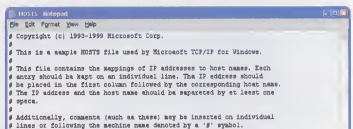
Internet Security 2004 continues to fail with its Live Updates?
Louis M Scully

Your problem with Live Update is not unique and other people have reported similar problems. Unfortunately, there is not a single cause or solution, so you will just have to try a few things and see what happens. Uninstalling and then re-installing does not take that long and if it cures the problem, it is worth doing. You should also try installing the latest version of Live Update. Type the following address into Internet Explorer's address box: **ftp://ftp.symantec.com/public/english_us_canada/liveupdate/lusetup.exe**.

It is possible that a virus has infected the system at some point and is preventing Live Update from working. You should perform a thorough scan of the hard disk drive using both Norton and an online virus scanner such as the one at Trend Micro (**www.antivirus.com**). Some viruses modify the hosts file that is used when accessing the Internet to prevent access to websites offering security products. You need to check it and reset it if necessary. Click Start/ Search and enter 'hosts' in to the search box. When the file is found, start Notepad and then drag the hosts file from the Search Results window and drop it on Notepad. Only one line is necessary and all others can be deleted:

```
127.0.0.1 localhost
```

For some people, renaming a file that is not used by the consumer version of the Norton product cures the problem. Click Start/ Search and enter 'S32LUHL1.DLL' into the search box. Select the hard disk drive in the Look In box and click Search. When the file is found, right-click it and select Rename. Change it to S32LUHL1.old.



The hosts file in c:\Windows\System32\Drivers\etc only need one entry for localhost

Music maestro

The most popular freeware audio editing utility is Audacity. It is easy to use and packed with features

I have a collection of music cassettes that I would like to back up for safe keeping and convert to CDs. Could you please tell me if there are any programs (or hardware as required) for this? I have Pinnacle Music Box USB version 9 on hand, but I don't know that if it could be used for sound tracks only without video input.
Bill Hslung

The only way of transferring music from a cassette to the computer is to connect the line out of a hi-fi or cassette player to the line in of the PC's sound card. You can then use any suitable PC audio recording software to record the music. An excellent audio editing utility is the very popular Audacity and this can be downloaded for free from **http://audacity.sourceforge.net/windows.php**. If you want to save the music in .mp3 format, you need to download the LAME .mp3 encoder library from **http://mitiok.free.fr**, but if you are writing the music to CD, it is best to save to .wav format anyway because the quality is higher.

To record with Audacity, just select Line In from the drop-down list of input sources and then click the big record button at the top. You can record and save each track separately by manually stopping and starting the tape and recording, or you could record the whole music cassette and then chop the audio file up into tracks afterwards.

Audacity has lots of useful filters and effects for cleaning up audio tracks before you save them and write them to CD.

More bandwidth wanted

Sony Valo desktop computer, AMD Athlon 2.8GHz, 120GB hard drive

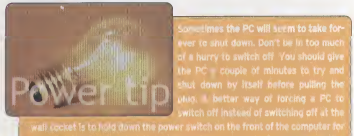
I have a broadband connection with Tiscali. Every second or third time that I boot up the system, the ADSL light on the modem keeps flashing and I get the following warning on the screen: "Warning insufficient bandwidth. Other applications currently occupy the USB bandwidth. Please close all other applications, then remove other USB devices. Click OK to continue."

I only have two devices connected to the USB ports: the modem and my mouse. I have been in contact with Tiscali and they sent me a new modem, but it has made no difference. Once I finally do get a connection there is no problem, but at times it can take 30 minutes or so to get the connection.
Alan Calder

The forums at Tiscali might be able to offer some help, so go to **www.tiscali.co.uk/forums/** and select Broadband Service Support. Unfortunately, it wasn't working when we visited, but we found several Tiscali broadband problems posted elsewhere and it seems that a few people are experiencing connection difficulties. Some people blame Tiscali, others reckon it might be at the user's end of the connection. The only thing you can try is to eliminate everything at your end.

It is possible for USB devices to draw

"Some people blame Tiscali, others reckon it might be at the user's end of the connection.

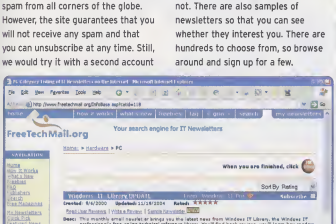


FreeTechMail

www.freetechmail.org

FreeTechMail is an unusual website because it has little or no content of its own. What is has is a comprehensive list of sources of free email newsletters. All you need to do is to pick the newsletters you want to receive and provide your email address. We would normally advise caution when signing up for anything on the Internet because your email address can get passed around and you end up getting lots of unsolicited spam from all corners of the globe. However, the site guarantees that you will not receive any spam and that you can unsubscribe at any time. Still, we would try it with a second account first, rather than your primary email address.

The newsletters cover a wide range of topics and they are placed in groups to make it easier to find the topics you are interested in. For example, in the Operating system group is WinInfo Daily, Windows Registry Guide, WinXPnews and others. Each newsletter is rated by visitors who have tried it, so you can easily see what is good and what is not. There are also samples of newsletters so that you can see whether they interest you. There are hundreds to choose from, so browse around and sign up for a few.



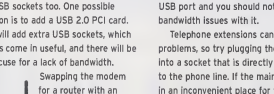
Get news, tips, problems and their solutions delivered to your inbox with these newsletters

too much power from the PC and this can cause problems. The PC may shut down a device to stop it drawing the power. There might be problems with the USB sockets too. One possible solution is to add a USB 2.0 PCI card. This will add extra USB sockets, which always come in useful, and there will be no excuse for a lack of bandwidth.

Swapping the modem for a router with an ADSL modem is another possible solution to the bandwidth problem.

Modern PCs often have network interfaces built in, but if you don't have one, PCI network cards are very cheap. They are many times faster than the USB port and you should not have any bandwidth issues with it.

Telephone extensions can cause problems, so try plugging the modem into a socket that is directly connected to the phone line. If the main socket is in an inconvenient place for the PC, just move the PC temporarily for testing purposes. Unplug all other phones and devices and try connecting.



If you have too many USB devices, you can connect to the Internet with a router

Help from the professionals

Do you have a pressing problem that you just can't solve yourself? Why not send it in to PC Utilities and our resident experts will endeavour to find a solution for you. Just fill out the following form and pop it in the post to:

Professional Help, PC Utilities, Live Publishing, Europa House, Adlington Park, Macclesfield, Cheshire, SK10 4NP, UK

Name _____

Address _____

_____

_____

Email _____

System _____

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Problem _____

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Continue on a separate sheet of paper if required. Alternatively, email us at **help@pc-utilities.co.uk**

All your PC problems - solved!

ISSUE 20 ON SALE NOW

Troubleshoot PC problems with the ultimate collection of repair and recovery tools. Packed with essential guides and program reviews. DON'T MISS IT!

Security watch

Keep up to date with the latest viruses and protect yourself from the worst of the Internet

We've all had that Monday morning feeling – lethargy, a lack of energy and the same old work routine ahead of us. However, Mondays are really not that bad and it's Wednesdays that cause most headaches. According to ScanSafe (**http://scansafe.net**), 21% of viruses strike on a Wednesday and only 6% strike at the weekend. The theory is that new viruses are released at the weekend and by the middle of the week they reach an infectious peak. Towards the end of the week, people start cleaning up their computers and so the number of sources of infection declines. Unfortunately, the number of different threats has been rising by 15% every quarter.

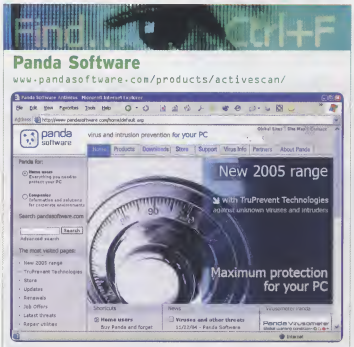
Instead of releasing patches as security flaws are discovered, in October 2003, Microsoft moved to a monthly update cycle. In some ways this is better because you can download all the fixes in one big patch rather than lots of small ones. However, virus writers have cottoned on to this and some now release their virus just before the next update. It's then too late for Microsoft to include a fix, so the virus has a whole month until the next update in which to spread.

We're all Doomed

Watch out because there is a new version of the MyDoom virus circulating on the Internet and it may not be detected by your antivirus software. The virus spreads via email, but the email itself does not contain any virus code, so antivirus programs don't detect anything untoward and let it pass through to your Inbox. In the email is a link to a website and there will be a message encouraging you to click it – beware of unsolicited special offers.

When the link is clicked, Internet Explorer starts up and goes to the website. This site is infected with the IFrame virus and using a flaw in Internet Explorer concerning the way src and name attributes are handled in frame, iframe and embedded tags, it's possible to execute code on your computer. Your PC is then infected and becomes a host to the virus. A Web server is set up and the virus accesses Internet Relay Chat servers.

At the time of writing, there are no security patches available and it is difficult to tell that you have been infected because there are no visible signs. The best way to detect and remove this virus is with an up-to-date virus scanner.

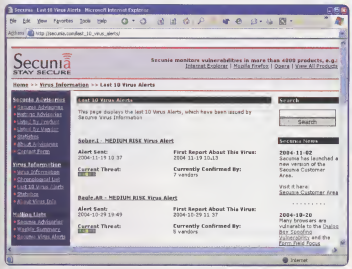


Panda Software isn't as well known as McAfee or Symantec, but it produces good antivirus software. It also provides a free online virus scanner called ActiveScan that will clean up your PC. Select it on the homepage.

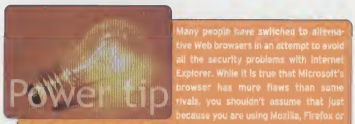
Spoofing and phishing

When the mouse pointer hovers over a hyperlink on a webpage or in an email, the status bar shows the destination of the link. This is a useful feature of Internet Explorer because it tells you where the link will take you if you click on it. However, spoofing is a technique that enables the true destination address to be replaced by another of the author's choosing.

This can be used in phishing scams where you are asked to click a link to go to your online bank, eBay, PayPal or some other site where you have to enter login details, bank or credit card details. When you look at the status bar, it appears to confirm that you are going to be taken to the right site, but in reality, it is a bogus site set up to capture your details and empty your bank account.



The Secunia website at http://secunia.com/last_10_virus_alerts/ reveals the current top 10 viruses

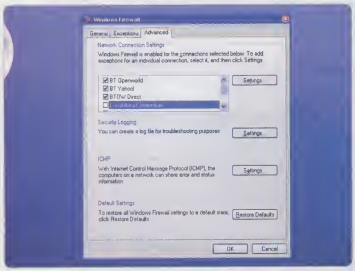


Many people have switched to alternative Web browsers in an attempt to avoid all the security problems with Internet Explorer. While it is true that Microsoft's browser has more flaws than some rivals, you shouldn't assume that just because you are using Mozilla, Firefox or Opera you're perfectly safe. A problem has been identified with the way these browsers open new pages in tabbed windows. If you open a page in one tab and then enter information into a form on a second tab, the first tab can grab the focus and read the data. Try the test at http://secunia.com/multiple_browsers_form_field_focus_test/. Inactive tabs can also display dialogs that you might think are from the current tabbed window. Try the test at http://secunia.com/ multiple_browsers_dialog_box_spoofing_test/.

The only way to protect yourself is to regularly download the latest version of your chosen browser.

The problem with Windows Firewall

Windows XP Service Pack 2's firewall is more powerful than ever, but it can cause a few headaches. We have the solutions



You can easily turn Windows Firewall on or off for individual Internet connections

Individual settings

Q *I have a notebook computer and connect to the Internet at home through a wireless router with an ADSL modem. When I am at work, I connect through a modem. The router has a built-in firewall, so I don't need the services of a software firewall when at home. However, I do need protection when I'm using the modem at work. Windows Firewall seems to be either on or off for everything. Can I configure the two connection methods separately?*

A Windows Firewall is enabled for every Internet connection by default. This is by design because many people don't realise they need a firewall and their computers are at risk of attack by malicious software. Unlike the firewall in XP, Service Pack 2's settings are global. However, you can easily configure individual connections the way you want.

Click Start/ Control Panel and in Classic View, double-click Windows Firewall. On the General tab are the global settings and you can turn it on or off for all connections. Set it to On and go to the Advanced tab. Under Network Connection Settings is a list of Internet connections on your computer. Tick the ones that require Windows Firewall and clear the tick against those that don't need it.

Unblocked connections

Q *I have two computers that are connected by a network. I have enabled Windows Firewall, but I find that one computer can still detect the other one and that it can access the Shared Documents folder on the hard disk. I thought a firewall was supposed to prevent this sort of thing from happening. Is this a security flaw and if so, how do I block it?*

A Windows Firewall is not faulty and it is using its default settings, which is to allow file and printer sharing. The firewall is designed to operate in many different environments and it can be configured to either allow or block connections from other computers on a local area network. Microsoft has chosen default settings that will work for most people straight out of the box, but obviously they will not suit everyone and some people need to customise them.

By default, Internet traffic is blocked, but local traffic isn't. If you want to block folder and printer sharing, or if it's disabled and you want to enable it, click Start/ Control Panel and double-click Windows Firewall. Select the Exceptions tab and clear the tick against File and Printer Sharing to disable it or tick it to enable it.

Is it working?

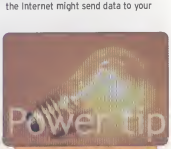
Q *I am a bit concerned about Windows Firewall in Service Pack 2. In the past, I have used the free version of ZoneAlarm and this warned me whenever a program tried to access the Internet. I could then decide whether to allow it access or not. Windows Firewall just seems to let everything through. In fact, I have not seen it block anything at all. Can it be trusted?*

If Windows Firewall cannot detect your firewall, you will see a pop-up security message every time you start Windows. This is irritating, but fortunately, you can turn it off. Click the Security Center icon at the right-hand side of the Taskbar or run it from the Control Panel. Click Change the way Security Center alerts me on the left, and in the Alert Settings dialog, clear the tick against Firewall. Click OK.

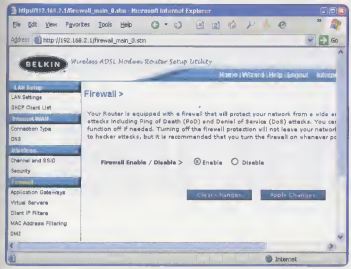
If you want to share folders or a printer on your computer, make sure this is ticked

A Many people will find that they don't notice Windows Firewall working in the background and after installing Service Pack 2, their computer works just the same as it did before. Even though the firewall is enabled, many programs that require Internet access have no difficulty getting though and no warnings are raised by Windows.

It uses the concept of solicited and unsolicited Internet traffic. When you enter a URL into a Web browser, it sends out a request for the page and after a few seconds, it comes back from the Internet. This is an example of solicited traffic and a program has asked for some data, so it is allowed. A virus on the Internet might send data to your



Security Center in Windows XP Service Pack 2 is designed for novices. If you are an expert user expand the Firewall section in Security Center and click the Recommendations button. In the next dialog, tick I have a firewall solution that I'll monitor myself.



You can turn the Windows Firewall off if you have alternative firewall hardware or software

computer in an effort to infect it. This is unsolicited traffic because your PC has not asked for it and it will be blocked.

A program that listens for unsolicited traffic, such as an FTP or Web server, would immediately cause Windows Firewall to display a warning message on the screen and to block it. However, it is also possible to suppress warning messages and this might be the reason why you're not seeing them. Click Start/ Control Panel and double-click Windows Firewall. Select the Exceptions tab and down at the bottom, tick Display a notification when Windows Firewall blocks a program.

Undetected firewall

Q *Security Center reports that my firewall is not working. I connect to the Internet via a router and according to the specifications, it has a built-in firewall. I am worried that it is not protecting me. Should I turn Windows Firewall on?*

A You should definitely turn Windows Firewall on if you don't know whether you're protected. If you are running a popular software firewall on your computer like ZoneAlarm, or Norton Firewall, Windows can detect it and it will report whether it is working OK.

When the firewall is external to the PC, such as built into a router on a network, Windows cannot detect it and this is why it is reporting that your computer is at risk. If the router's firewall is turned on then you are safe, but we wonder whether you have enabled it and its default state might be disabled. Consult the router manual and it will tell you how to turn on the firewall. Typically, you would enter an address like 192.168.2.1 into Internet Explorer and then select the firewall in the settings.

After checking that the router's firewall is enabled, you can disable Windows Firewall and ignore any messages it might display about security.

Configure firewall exceptions

Q *I am in charge of several computers at the school where I work and we have half a dozen new PCs arriving shortly. If they do not have Service Pack 2 already installed, I plan to download it for the extra security it offers. Several of the programs we have use the Internet. Having used a firewall before, I just wait until a message pops up warning of Internet access and then allow it, but I don't want the pupils doing this. How can I configure it before they use it?*

A There are two ways to do this. On the right is a three-step guide for novices, but if you are a more experienced user, then you can configure the computers using a utility called Netsh. Click Start/ Run and enter 'cmd' to open a command prompt window. Configure the firewall to allow a particular program access to the internet by typing:

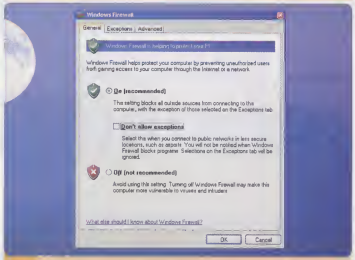
```
netsh firewall add path name =
ENABLE
```

For example, if you have a program called MyProg.exe in c:\Progs, you would enter:

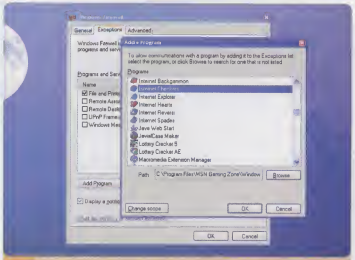
```
netsh firewall add c:\Progs\=
MyProg.exe MyProg ENABLE
```

Enter the commands into Notepad and save it as a .bat file, then take it to each PC and double-click it to run it.

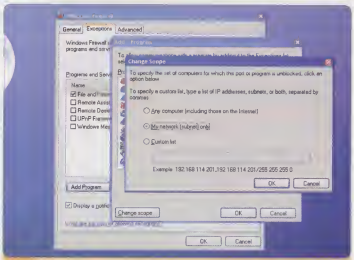
Configure Windows Firewall



step 1 *If you have a security icon at the right-hand side of the Taskbar, click it and then click Windows Firewall at the bottom. Alternatively, click Start/ Control Panel and switch to Classic View. Double-click Windows Firewall. Make sure Don't allow exceptions is unticked.*



step 2 *Select the Exceptions tab and click the Add Program button. A list of installed programs is displayed and you should find the one you want and select it. Not all software is displayed, so if you cannot find it, click Browse and then locate it on the hard disk.*



step 3 *Click the Change Scope button. Select Any Computer for a program that accesses the Internet. However, if you play games over a network, you can select My Network. This enables two networked PCs to play games, but all Internet traffic is blocked.*

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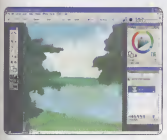

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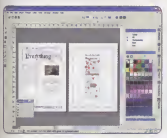

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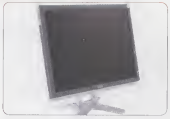
Ratings policy

At PC Utilities, we won't give a product a top score just to get on the good side of a manufacturer or software publisher. We take an honest, in-depth and critical look at all the products we review and test them thoroughly. Our aim is to give you an accurate review that you can use when you're considering a purchase. Only those products that represent the best in quality and value for money will receive a PC Utilities Recommended award, and the few products that truly excel will receive the PC Utilities Editor's Choice award.

Hardware



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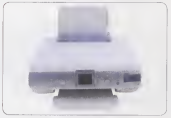

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Information managers

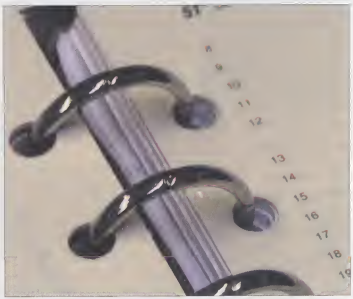
We take a look at some of the many instant-messaging tools available to see which one comes up trumps

There are some things it's very difficult to be without, and most people would agree that their diary and address book fit into this category. Most people ensure these are conveniently always at hand, whatever the situation. Until the dawn of computing, this used to mean carrying them around with you at all times, but nowadays you're just as likely to turn to your PC instead.

Computers make very good diaries and address books, and offer several benefits over paper versions. The most obvious of these is the fact you can integrate alarm functions into your diary and email people directly from your address book, but computer diaries and address books are also much quicker to search.

Software that provides functions such as address books, diaries and the like are often referred to as personal information managers (PIMs). Although there's no strict definition for this term, it includes anything designed to help you organise your life. As such, PIMs will often include features such as a To Do list and a notepad for jotting down moments of inspiration. In this round-up we've brought together five freeware and shareware tools that all fit into the PIM category. The most fully featured offer a collection of resources while others simply focus on one important section such as an address book or diary. With the aid of these utilities you should be able to organise your life more effectively. You'll find all of these tools and more besides on this month's coverdisc, under the Information managers tab.

Jake Bickerton



ABIX

ABIX is a complete personal organiser, which puts everything you could possibly need from an information manager in one package. The different sections of the organiser are displayed along the top of the main window, and even a cursory glance at this screen reveals it's an embarrassment of riches. It not only has the standard sections of any good organiser package – a good quality calendar, address book and notepad – but it also finds space to squeeze in an inventory taker, card file, To Do list maker and a program to help organise your budget. It even has an integrated backup function to preserve your important information in a safe place. There are options you certainly wouldn't expect to be included in an organiser program, and they help make the program a more attractive proposition than many other similar packages. With so many different sections, though, you'd be forgiven for thinking ABIX may take ages to get to grips with. The truth, however, is that you'll be up and running with it within minutes, partly thanks to it maintaining a similar interface throughout.

Each section of the program is fairly straightforward and contains everything you would typically find in a paper equivalent. The program is well suited to people who are used to using a paper diary, address book, card file and so on. The beauty of ABIX is its simplicity. Anyone who has tried to work out their budget with a pen and scrap of paper will find the budget section instantly useable, and it's a similar story with the card file if you are used to keeping recipes or notes about your video collection, for example, on paper library cards. If you're keen to move to a computerised organiser but want something that doesn't deviate much from what you are used to, you should turn straight to ABIX.

You can view a weekly, monthly or yearly view of your appointments

The address book has similar sections to a paper address book

Each item in your 'to do' can have a priority and due date

Supplier	Loginor
Website	www.loginor.qc.ca
For	Simple to learn
Against	Too basic for power users
Price	US$29.95
	83%

The main view shows an overview of four months at a time

You can filter information to display only details that are relevant

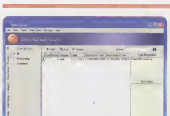
Task Plus

Task Plus is a simple diary and To Do program, which is well laid out and easy to read. Whenever you enter something new into the diary you first choose which category to put it into. Categories include Family, Work and Personal, but you can customise the program with your own categories, too. Category labels are important as these are used to filter out the events that should be displayed. By default, every category is shown, but you can choose to exclude events by filtering categories of your choice. Like most other computer diaries it has a built-in alarm, which not only grabs your attention by sounding an alarm but it also displays flashing colours onscreen in case your sound is muted.

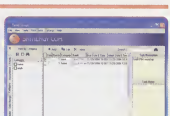
As well as adding events that are date specific, the program also enables you to add events that aren't tied to a date. So events that just need to be done anytime in the future can appear alongside everything else. The program is fairly straightforward and is therefore simple to get used to. It is supported by an advert box on the main screen, which can be removed by paying to register the software.

Supplier	Contact Plus
Website	www.contactplus.com
For	Simple and effective
Against	Expensive for what it is
Price	US$19.99

66%



Organise your To Do list tasks quickly and easily



You can display the category of your choice

TaskPrompt

TaskPrompt is another useful tool you can use to keep track of the tasks you need to complete in the upcoming days. The program offers only genuinely useful features and doesn't cram in a load of unnecessary options just to make it look better on paper. If you want something basic to organise the things you have to do over the few weeks, months or years, this is the software to choose.

Most of the program's workings are accessed through one dialog box in which you enter tasks. Here you type in a description and select an appropriate category for the task. The category list is empty when you first load the program, but each time you type in a new category it appears in the drop-down list. Like most other To Do programs, it's possible to set a priority rating for each task. TaskPrompt also enables you to set up repeated tasks on a daily, weekly or monthly basis, too.

In order to help you locate tasks in a lengthy list you can filter down the selection displayed by category or you can instead opt to display only those tasks that should be completed within a certain date range.

Supplier	Sykneray
Website	www.skynergy.com
For	Great for organising tasks
Against	No other PIM features
Price	Free

78%

Check your notepad and To Do list on your desktop

Click on the System Tray icon to edit your notes

Active Desktop Calendar

Active Desktop Calendar is an unusual PIM that displays a calendar, To Do list and notepad directly on your desktop. It works in the same way as many of the other PIMs featured here, but has the advantage of looking good and placing your information in a convenient place.

The program makers were inspired by the way people traditionally hang a calendar on the wall. The idea to integrate the calendar into the desktop wallpaper was simply to provide much the same feature for your PC. It arranges the information in such a way that there is still plenty of space for your desktop icons. To access the program's features and add things to your To Do list and notepad, all you have to do is click on the Active Desktop Calendar icon in the System Tray. Conveniently, the icon itself displays a number representing the current date. You can also edit details by double-clicking on the calendar, notepad or To Do list shown onscreen. Active Desktop Calendar has been designed for a multi-user environment so every user of your PC can set up a different password protected calendar.

Supplier	XemiComputers
Website	www.xemico.com
For	Looks good, always on display
Against	Takes over some of your desktop
Price	US$19.90

79%

The To Do list has integrated notes and detailed priority information

Find out what happened on the same day in history

WinOrganizer

WinOrganizer is the most fully featured of all the information managers in this round-up. There's very little that hasn't been included in the program and it provides more than enough to enable you to plan both your business and private life in great detail.

The usual information manager essentials of a calendar, address book, notebook and To Do list are all here but it's the degree of flexibility offered by the program that singles it out from the others. For example, rather than sticking with a plain text notepad, WinOrganizer's notepad enables you to format text and insert photos. This makes it possible to store information such as recipes with pictures, movie reviews with photos of the DVD sleeve or even entire Internet pages. If you want to telephone someone in your address book you can dial them directly from the software, and another great feature lists important historic events that happened on the same day in history.

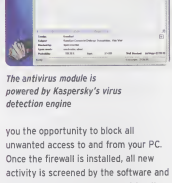
If you want something that not only replaces your paper address book and calendar but enhances these basic tools to make the most of your PC, this is definitely the package to go for.

Supplier	TGS Libs
Website	www.tgslabs.com
For	Countless features
Against	Intimidating for novice users
Price	US$34.95

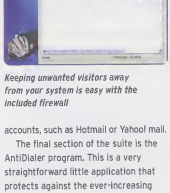
80%

Steganos Internet Security 7

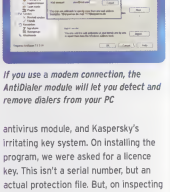
Internet Security 7 is the spearhead of the new range of security software from Steganos. Rather than simply updating its existing products (something that was getting a little long in the tooth if the truth be known), the new range incorporates a whole new set of titles that cover the company's previously untouched areas of PC security, thanks to a little help from Kaspersky Labs and Webroot. The Internet Security package consists of four different modules: Steganos AntiVirus 7, Personal Firewall 7, AntiSpam 7 and AntiDialer 7.



The antivirus module is powered by Kaspersky's virus detection engine



Keeping unwanted visitors away from your system is easy with the included firewall



If you use a modem connection, the AntiDialer module will let you detect and remove dialers from your PC

Virus protection

First up we'll take a look at the antivirus section of the suite. Despite the version number, AntiVirus 7 is Steganos' first attempt at a virus detection program, so it makes sense that the company should seek some expert assistance. This help has come in the form of Kaspersky Lab's antivirus engine, which powers the proceedings. As Kaspersky's antivirus software is well known for being powerful and accurate, this is certainly no bad thing. Even better is Steganos' streamlining of the Kaspersky interface. Kaspersky's own antivirus program is plagued with an unappealing and very unfriendly interface, which puts many users off. Steganos has refined this, and the interface on display here is a much more user friendly creation. This doesn't mean there are fewer features though – the application has all you'll need to keep viruses at bay, including on-demand and scheduled scanners, a quarantine facility, the ability to scan removable devices and regular updates.

The suite's personal firewall gives you the opportunity to block all unwanted access to and from your PC. Once the firewall is installed, all new activity is screened by the software and you're asked whether you want to allow access. After a time, the program will start to learn your preferences, and will become more and more accurate in its decisions. There's also a stealth mode that completely hides your PC from detection, keeping you hidden from any would-be intruders.

Steganos AntiSpam is another area where the company has enlisted help in bringing you effective software. Thanks to the spam killing skills of Webroot, Steganos AntiSpam aims to keep your email free from any unwanted mail. It can monitor your local email client for any potential spam by using detailed word filters, and by using the included 'training ground', you can teach the program what is and isn't unwanted email. To make the spam filters as useful as possible, there are a wide range of settings you can alter, including word lists, aggressiveness levels, and rosters of senders (much like a black and white list). Additionally, Steganos AntiSpam can also be used to protect your Web accounts, such as Hotmail or Yahoo! mail.

The final section of the suite is the AntiDialer program. This is a very straightforward little application that protects against the ever-increasing threat of dialler scripts that cause your PC to automatically dial up a specific number, costing you money.

Complete cover

With all of this protection, Steganos Internet Security 7 is a worthy option for users looking for a total security solution, and it makes sense to gather all of these programs under one umbrella. But, there are some annoying drawbacks to be found. Rather than being a combined and integrated suite of tools, a la Symantec's Internet Security, the Steganos offering is in fact four separate programs that all function independently, with no central control. This also means you have to install each program one by one. Also, while it's certainly nice to have it if you still use a modem, any user with broadband will find the AntiDialer app useless, as they no longer dial into a connection. These gripes are fairly minor though, and our major bugbear with the suite falls to the antivirus module, and Kaspersky's irritating key system. On installing the program, we were asked for a licence key. This isn't a serial number, but an actual protection file. But, on inspecting the installation, and even the install disc, there was no key to be found, and no instruction on how to get one. Only when we ventured onto Steganos' website did we find the key hidden away in the support database. This needed to be downloaded and entered into the program, and some form of signposting would have been nice.

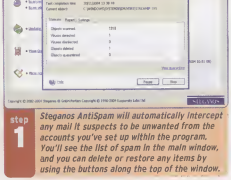
Taken as a whole though, we liked the idea behind the suite, and Steganos certainly knows how to make any program a breeze to use. Every module is simple and easy to understand, and each performs its job very well indeed.

Aaron Birch

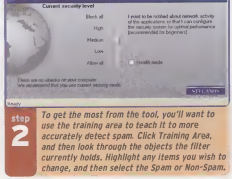
Supplier	Steganos
Contact	http://mail.steganos.com
Website	www.steganos.com
For	Very easy to use programs
Against	Not an integrated suite, Irritating key system
Price	£39.99

73%

Eliminate unwanted mail with Steganos AntiSpam



step 1 *Steganos AntiSpam will automatically intercept any mail it suspects to be unwanted from the accounts you've set up within the program. You'll see the list of spam in the main window, and you can delete or restore any items by using the buttons along the top of the window.*



step 2 *To get the most from the tool, you'll want to use the training area to teach it to more accurately detect spam. Click Training Area, and then look through the objects the filter currently holds. Highlight any items you wish to change, and then select the Spam or Non-Spam.*

step 3 *Approved and non-approved senders lists can be useful for blocking unwanted mail. Steganos AntiSpam supports this feature, and you can access it by selecting Settings from the main screen and then going to Senders. You can now add names to both Friends and Blocked lists.*

Corel Painter IX

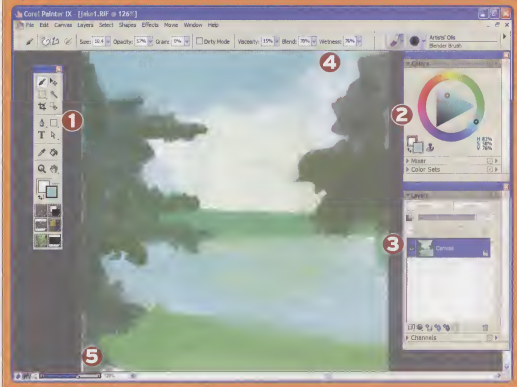
On the back of the handbook supplied with Corel Painter IX, the program is described as 'a treat for the artistic senses and a life-changing experience'. This is certainly a big claim, and while non-artists are unlikely to be quite so excited by the program, artists may be inclined to agree with the sentiment expressed. The fact the package has been designed by artists doesn't come as any surprise, as everything about it oozes arty sophistication. The first 20 or so pages of the invaluable handbook are set aside for a gallery of images created using the program. It could easily be mistaken for a coffee table art book were it not for the series of beautifully laid out tutorials and details about using the different brushes that reveal it to be an instruction manual after all.

The example images in the handbook show an array of impressive pictures from simple cartoon graphics to landscapes and poster designs. This diversity is a testament to the almost limitless possibilities of the program. If you have the artistic talent that's also required to get the most out of Corel Painter IX, there's no reason why the program shouldn't become just as essential as your oil paints or watercolours.

Natural media

The basic premise of the program is to enable you to draw and paint using digital versions of real brushes, pens, pencils, paper and so on. When you hold down your mouse (or pen if you have a graphics tablet) to paint, it creates a smooth, continuous stroke that's very similar to a proper brush. The best way to think of the software is as a fully stocked art store that never runs out of supplies and requires only a one-off fee to entitle you to help yourself to as many things as you like. Unlike real equipment, it's possible to adapt everything to create unique new brushes, pencils or paper to assist in getting the look and feel you're after.

The Corel Painter IX interface



1 Control Panel Here you choose what tool and type of paper to use. The brush is the tool you're likely to use most often.

2 The Colors palette Select the colour you want to use using a combination of the circle and triangle shaped palettes. Alternatively, press Mixer to use a traditional mixing tray device.

3 Layers The software uses layers in a similar way to most photo-editing programs.

4 Brush Toolbar Use the drop-down menus to select your brush, choose the size, transparency and so on. There's a large selecton of brushes and pencils on offer.

5 Zoom bar Quickly zoom in and out of your picture using the slider.

You can also take advantage of digital effects enabling you to brush or spray on paper textures, gradients and patterns. Everything in your picture can be smeared, blended, chopped and changed in order to produce an accurate representation of the image you have in your head.

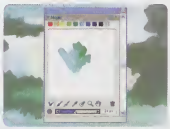
Corel Painter has been around for over 13 years now and this new release is one of the most significant as it speeds up the operation of brushes. On average, brushes are now twice their former speed, and some are 10 times faster than before. This is a vast improvement on the sometimes frustratingly slow performance of the previous version and makes the software feel much more naturalistic to use. Corel has also added an Artists' Oils Painting System, which enables you to apply colours as very realistic looking wet oily paint.

At the end of the day there's no escaping the fact this is aimed squarely at commercial designers, artists and photographers. It is, after all, unlikely that someone with only a passing interest in painting will go out and spend almost £300 on a painting and drawing program. However, even if you only paint as a hobby, it's a good idea to download the free demo version of the software from the Corel website. To make things easier when painting and drawing, it is also worthwhile investing in a graphics tablet or, if your budget can stretch to it, a Tablet PC. It's an understatement to say the humble mouse isn't well suited to painting – it will only hinder your progress when using the software.

If you have a passion for painting, or if you work in the graphics industry, you should go out and get a copy of Corel Painter IX now. It's fast, extremely realistic and something you really shouldn't be without.

Jake Bickerton

Check out some of the artwork produced using Corel Painter IX on the Corel website



You can mix paints together in a virtual mixing tray to create the colour you require

Supplier	Corel
Contact	0800 376 9271
Website	www.corel.co.uk
For	Realistic painting tools
Against	For professionals and enthusiasts only
Price	£232.76

80%

McAfee VirusScan 2005

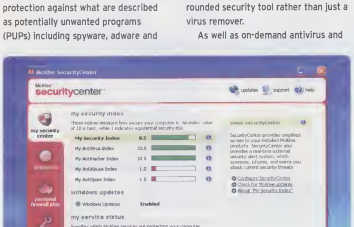
McAfee is one of the best known names in antivirus protection and the annual release of its antivirus software is major news in the antivirus world. Over the past few years, McAfee has made a substantial improvement by introducing protection against what are described as potentially unwanted programs (PUPs) including spyware, adware and diallers. It looks for PUPs at the same time as it is scanning your machine for viruses so you can be sure your PC is clean once it has undergone a thorough Virusscan check. This improvement helps turn the program into a more rounded security tool rather than just a virus remover.

As well as on-demand antivirus and PUP scanning, the program automatically checks for viruses whenever you go on the Net. It destroys all viruses it finds before they get a chance to infect your machine and keeps you protected against viruses in email attachments, downloaded files, chat rooms and file-sharing programs.

One of the keys to stopping the spread of viruses is to keep a close eye on the emails being sent out by your system. If you've been infected with a virus there's a reasonable chance your PC will be hijacked by the virus maker and used to automatically send out a mass mailing of the virus to every email address stored on your machine. This could all be done very quickly and completely without your knowledge. VirusScan, however, prevents this happening in the first place by routinely checking all your outgoing mail for viruses before they are sent out. If any suspicious looking programs (mass-mailing worms or Trojans, for example) attempt to run while you are using your PC, it immediately draws your attention to the fact. Unless you give your approval for the program or email to continue, it is stopped in its tracks.

As is traditional with antivirus programs, the cost of the software includes one year of virus definition updates. McAfee VirusScan an ideal way to keep your PC clean of viruses and malware and is highly recommended.

Jake Bickerton



McAfee Security Center displays an overview of your current security settings, just like the Windows XP Service Pack 2 Security Center

McAfee Virusscan now tracks down both viruses and potentially unwanted programs

Supplier	McAfee
Contact	020 7949 0107
Website	www.mcafee.com
For	Removes viruses and PUPs
Against	The Security Centur is really just an advert for McAfee
Price	£34.99
	82%

PC Tutor Learn Office, Windows and More Deluxe

Qualifications are more important than ever when job hunting, or planning a move to an alternative career. Having the right selection of experience and scholastic achievements is key to getting your dream job. This applies just as much to computing as it does to tradecraft, and knowing your way around Windows and Office is an invaluable skill.

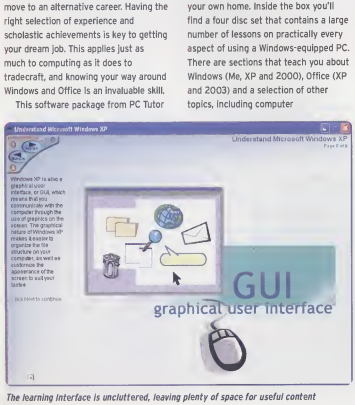
This software package from PC Tutor is a teaching aid, which will help you earn this expertise from the comfort of your own home. Inside the box you'll find a four disc set that contains a large number of lessons on practically every aspect of using a Windows-equipped PC. There are sections that teach you about Windows (Me, XP and 2000), Office (XP and 2003) and a selection of other topics, including computer fundamentals, Internet Explorer and even basic Web design with FrontPage. As this is the deluxe edition, QuickBooks Pro training is also featured.

Lessons take different forms, depending on their content. Some are simply pages of useful information that help you understand how things work and give you useful tips, and other lessons also include 'scenarios'. These are interactive lessons that give you a little experience at using the different functions of Windows or various applications, without actually having the program installed. Lessons are split into varying levels, with selections getting harder and more complex as you progress. At any time during your course, you can check on your overall status and can consult a useful glossary of terms.

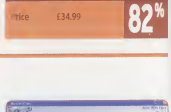
The courses included are excellent for new PC users, and the bonus of Microsoft certification means that this is a good way of getting ready to take the official Microsoft certification test. Unfortunately, much of the content is very basic indeed, and even the trickier subjects shepherd the user through, leaving little room for discovery, making this a simple copying exercise. Also, the whole setup comes on four CDs, which means you'll need to switch CDs to access some of the lessons. Not a major letdown granted, but surely the program could fit onto a single DVD?

If you're a new PC user in need of tutoring in the workings of Windows and Office, than this is a good place to start. But, don't expect any real hands-on learning.

Aaron Birch

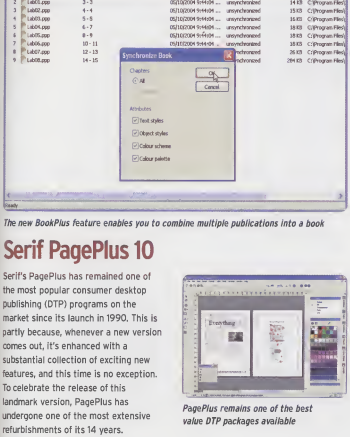


The learning interface is uncluttered, leaving plenty of space for useful content



The scenarios provided in the package offer a little interactivity, but not much

Supplier	Nova Development
Contact	01752 202507
Website	www.novadevelopment.co.uk
For	Well suited for beginners, Microsoft certified
Against	Not enough hands-on content, too basic for some
Price	£39.99
	70%



The new BookPlus feature enables you to combine multiple publications into a book

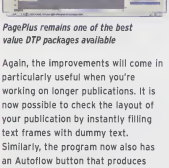
Serif PagePlus 10

Serif's PagePlus has remained one of the most popular consumer desktop publishing (DTP) programs on the market since its launch in 1990. This is partly because, whenever a new version comes out, it's enhanced with a substantial collection of exciting new features, and this time is no exception. To celebrate the release of this landmark version, PagePlus has undergone one of the most extensive refurbishments of its 14 years.

The most enticing of its new features is called BookPlus. This enables you to link several PagePlus publications into a seamless book. The pages of the book are automatically re-numbered when the individual publications change, and the style of the pages is kept consistent throughout the different publications that comprise the book. This is the first time PagePlus has provided features to assist you in producing anything larger than relatively small document with, say, four or five pages. It still isn't feasible to make a single publication with dozens of pages as this would require too much memory, but while you still have to spread a large publication over numerous smaller publications, you no longer have to manually take care of the page numbers and style of each publication yourself.

There are several other new features of note in this latest release, including an expanded Mail and Photo Merge function. This makes it possible to do things such as merging a collection of photos into a template to produce a photo album or catalogue.

The text-editing capabilities of the program have been improved, too.



PagePlus remains one of the best value DTP packages available

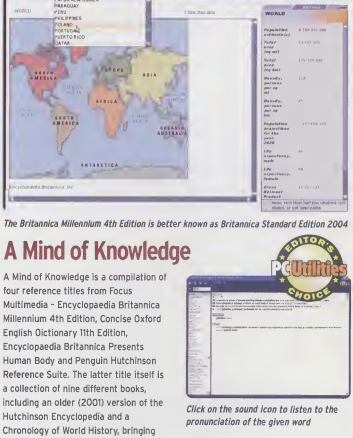
Again, the improvements will come in particularly useful when you're working on longer publications. It is now possible to check the layout of your publication by instantly filling text frames with dummy text. Similarly, the program now also has an Autoflow button that produces new dummy frames and pages in longer stories.

It's good to see PagePlus continues to be updated with genuinely useful new features. This helps to ensure that the package remains fresh and useful as users's needs develop. Anyone in the market for an affordable DTP package still has an easy choice – there remains only one sensible options and that's still PagePlus. As an added bonus, if you already own a copy of PagePlus, you can upgrade for just £49.99

Jake Bickerton

Supplier	Serif
Contact	0800 557 3743
Website	www.serif.co.uk
For	Useful new features
Against	Nothing new for shorter publications
Price	£99.99

79%



The Britannica Millennium 4th Edition is better known as Britannica Standard Edition 2004

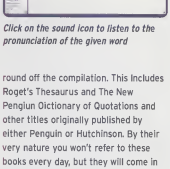
A Mind of Knowledge

A Mind of Knowledge is a compilation of four reference titles from Focus Multimedia – Encyclopaedia Britannica Millennium 4th Edition, Concise Oxford English Dictionary 11th Edition, Encyclopaedia Britannica Presents Human Body and Penguin Hutchinson Reference Suite. The latter title itself is a collection of nine different books, including an older (2001) version of the Hutchinson Encyclopedia and a Chronology of World History, bringing the total number of different titles in this compilation to 12.

Long gone are the days when you had to spend a small fortune to get hold of the Encyclopaedia Britannica. Now for roughly the price of a packet of cigarettes you get 41,000 articles, over 1,000 world maps and a year in review spanning 10 years. While this is only a drop in the ocean compared to the entire 32 volumes of the encyclopaedia, it's nevertheless a hearty portion. Also included is a Britannica-branded program called Human Body. As you might expect, this is all about health and how people grow and develop. It features such things as a virtual skeleton and a virtual journey through the circulatory system.

The Concise Oxford English Dictionary is one of the most famous dictionaries in the world and the PC version has clear advantages over the paper edition – you can quickly search for words and listen to spoken pronunciations for more than 50,000 words, for example. You can also cross-reference words and cut and paste sections into your word processor.

Another nine reference books converted into digital form called Penguin Hutchinson Reference Suite



Click on the sound icon to listen to the pronunciation of the given word

round off the compilation. This includes Roget's Thesaurus and The New Penguin Dictionary of Quotations and other titles originally published by either Penguin or Hutchinson. By their very nature you won't refer to these books every day, but they will come in extremely useful on occasion. Strangely, the Reference Suite also provides a few publications such as the Longman Dictionary of English language and the Hutchinson Encyclopedia that are very similar to others already included in this compilation. Still, it's better to have too much than too little.

This compilation's price makes it very attractive for both students and anyone else with a keen interest in learning. Having such a mass of facts and figures on tap will guarantee you learn at least something new every day.

Jake Bickerton

Supplier	Focus
Contact	01889 570 156
Website	www.focusmm.co.uk
For	Extremely good value
Against	Some material is out of date
Price	£19.99

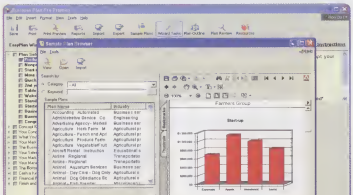
84%

Business Plan Pro 2005 Premier Edition

Starting a business isn't something to be taken lightly, and getting your venture off the ground is a challenging task. Many people try, and many people fail. While there's no such thing as a guaranteed method of making your business a success, having a well laid out business plan is a very good place to start, and improves your chances of succeeding in your goals.

Business Plan Pro 2005 is a software package that should let any PC user do just this, and by using the program, you'll be able to produce an in-depth and complete plan that covers every aspect of your business, from forecast figures and business strategy, to presentations for banks and investors to help impress your possible collaborators.

The software is understandably complex, and isn't something you'll be using in five minutes. It can deal with just about any task you'd care to throw at it. To help get you started the package features over 400 sample business plans, so you'll have something to work with before you start from scratch, and there are several step-by-step wizards included to aid you further. Import options for data are extensive, and you can grab data from QuickBooks and Sage, and export options are just as useful, with the ability to export information to Excel, Word, PowerPoint, the Web, to .pdf and more.



The simple templates option is a good way for beginners to get started

Financial tools included in Business Plan Pro 2005 are as extensive as ever, this time featuring revised cash flow tools, the ability to create 'what-if' scenarios and much more accurate financial projections. You can create custom spreadsheets for your plans, add text topics, images and charts, meaning you can truly create your own personal plan. There are even tips from several industry experts included, and a business planning book (Hurdle – The Book on Business Planning) is included.

Like its predecessors, Business Plan Pro 2005 is one of those programs that just works, pure and simple. If you're planning on starting your own business, and need to create a plan, then this is the software you need. After all, if companies like Hewlett Packard, AT&T, Ford and Apple use it, it's got to be doing something right.

Aaron Birch

Using the wizard option, you can answer questions about your business to create a plan

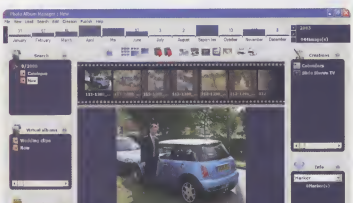
Supplier	PaloAlto
Contact	02076 109371
Website	www.paloalto.co.uk
For	Very powerful, masses of templates
Against	Not for the layman, expensive
Price	£159.99

83%

Photo Album Manager

Capturing and editing pictures is just the beginning of the digital photography process. Once you've got your photos in a decent state, the next step is to organise, print and share them with friends

Mindscape's Photo Album Manager has been designed to deal with all your post editing digital photography needs, and brings a wide range of options under one accessible interface. As you might expect from the program's name, one of its primary function is to catalogue your images to make them easier to access. When you first run the program, this involves scanning your hard drive for images to catalogue. After this process is complete, you'll be able to browse through your pictures using a variety of different views, mirroring those available in Windows XP. It's also possible to add custom tags to your images to organise them into different groups such as Family, Holidays etc. Multiple tags can be added to each image by simply dragging them from the Marker pane onto the image. These can then be later used to locate specific types of pictures.



The timeline at the top of the program window enables you to browse images by date

One of the image library's most appealing features is the ability to browse your digital images based on the date they were created. This is made possible thanks to a simple timeline at the top of the screen, which clearly displays how many pictures in the current album were captured in each month. Unfortunately, this feature helps to highlight one of the suite's shortcomings – its speed. Switching between folders or dates on the timeline incurs a fair delay each time as the thumbnails are identified and loaded.

The program has plenty to offer beyond just organising your images. For example, you can created slideshows to play on your PC or DVD slideshows that can be burnt to disc from within the program. It's also possible to create traditional photo album-style displays that can be exported in .pdf format.

Photo Album Manager provides a good range of options and some useful image management tools. The interface is relatively easy to use and despite being a little slow, the organisational options mean finding the image you want shouldn't take long. Most of the features are quite basic and lack customisation options, but for a cheap image management tool, it does the job.

Gavin Burrell

PC-based slideshows can use a variety of different transition effects

Supplier	Mindscape
Contact	quiries@mindscape.com
Website	www.mindscape.com
For	Plenty of features, easy to use
Against	Lacks customisable options, slow
Price	£9.95

76%

INTRODUCING
THE NEW BUCCANEER 925

"..cool, composed, and highly capable"
"..the new Buccaneer is a champ"
"..creates an impressive wake"

Buccaneer Review - PC Zone July 2004

WORK HARD, PLAY HARD

"Impressively quiet for a performance machine."

"Impressively built with a general air of solidity."

82%

PC Extreme Review - Issue 20

BUCCANEER 925

Chieftec Matrix Casa
Tagan 480w Quiet PSU
Intel® Pentium® 4 Processor 550 (3.4GHz/90nm/800FSB/1MB Cache/LGA775)
Intel® D925XCVLK Motherboard
Crucial Ballistic DDR 2 667Mhz - 512MB x 2
ATI Radeon X600XT 256MB PCI-Express 16x
Seagate Barracuda SATA (7200rpm/8MB Cache) 200GB x 2 on RAID 0
Sony DW-D18A Black 8x Dual Layer DVD Writer
Sony CRX320E-B2 Black DVD/CDRW Drive (52x32x52x16)
Creative Audigy™ 2 ZS Platinum Pro - Optional
Microsoft® Windows® XP Professional
Logitech® Internet Keyboard
Logitech® MX™ 510 Performance Optical Mouse

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Intel® PRO/Wireless 2100 LAN
ATI Mobility™ Radeon™ 9700 with 64MB gfx memory
4 x USB 2.0 Ports
1 x TV Out
1 x IEEE 1394 B Type Jack
1 10/100/1000 Mbps Fast Ethernat Controller
1 x V92 Modem
Built in Stereo Speakers and Microphona

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New Year's resolutions

We put some of the latest flat panel displays through their paces, so you can finally ditch that old CRT monitor

The CRT (Cathode Ray Tube) has been with us for a very long time – over 100 years, in fact – and although the technology has improved over the years, the core of the PC CRT monitor has always remained the same. CRTs are now relatively cheap, but are still big, bulky, and in some people's opinions, not entirely good for you.

Enter the LCD monitor. These new monitors not only come in a more compact and manageable size, but they also have higher resolution capabilities and are capable of displaying a sharper image. The lack of a tube also makes them much easier on the eyes, which is a great reason for anyone to upgrade from their old tube. Flat panel screens also use around a third of the power of CRTs, meaning you'll even save some money on your power bill.

Because of these reasons, upgrading to an LCD monitor is a very good idea, and one we would heartily recommend. It may cost that little bit extra, but it'll only take a few hours of use before you notice the difference, and your eyes will thank you for it. So, if you're in the market for a new flat panel monitor, and want to put that old CRT to bed, take a look at these offerings before you buy.

Aaron Birch

Very refreshing

One of the main reasons why LCD monitors are better for you than CRTs is down to the way each technology draws the onscreen image. CRT models work by constantly drawing the onscreen image over and over. The refresh rate of a monitor determines how fast this process is. A monitor running at a refresh rate of 60Hz for example, will refresh the screen 60 times a second, with higher refresh rates being quicker. The lower this rate, the more noticeable the refreshing is, and the quicker the onset of eyestrain and headaches.

LCD monitors on the other hand don't constantly refresh the image, and each individual pixel stays on or off, only changing when instructed to do so to reflect the change in the image. This makes for a much sharper image with no flickering, meaning a much more pleasurable experience.

What to look for

When looking to buy an LCD screen, you'll want to consider a few key points. Aside from the obvious considerations of size and prize, you should also take note of a monitor's Contrast Ratio. Cheaper LCD monitors struggle to display dark colours adequately, and will most likely have a contrast ratio of around 200:1, which is poor. Most average models will have a ratio of 300:1, but for the best performance, you'll want a contrast ratio of 400:1 or more. You'll also want a monitor with a fast response time (response to changes onscreen). This is measured in milliseconds, and the basic rule is the lower, the better, especially for gaming.

Lastly you'll need to look at the viewing angle. Lower quality monitors will have a limiting viewing angle, and looking at the screen from a sharp angle, and not straight on, will cause the colours to distort. So, the better the viewing angle, the better the monitor.

How they compare

Model	Size	Resolution	Inputs	Speakers
AOC LM725	17in	1280x1024	VGA	Yes
Philips 190S5	19in	1280x1024	VGA	No
Aries Neoview AL190	19in	1280x1024	VGA, DVI	No
Sony SDM-S94	19in	1280x1024	VGA, DVI	No
CTX F773L	17in	1280x1024	VGA	Yes

Price £199.16 **83%**

AOC LM725

At only £200 this monitor from AOC is one of the cheapest around. At this price we weren't expecting much and, sure enough, the build and style are simplistic and the thin plastic base and general feel of the monitor mark it as a budget model. But it has a few tricks up its sleeve despite the low price. A 1,280x1,024 native resolution and 350:1 contrast ratio may be nothing special but the 16ms response time is incredible for such a cheap monitor.

Its scaling abilities are fine and it makes a credible attempt at displaying 800x600 and 1,024x768 resolutions. The screen has a blue tinge by default but a bit of messing around with the display settings soon cancels this out and the screen displays whites well. It also manages reasonable dark black tones, even in a dark room.

The viewing angle isn't great but this doesn't really matter since it makes the ideal budget gaming monitor with its low response times and realistically low purchase price.

Supplier	AOC
Contact	01932-248564
Website	www.aoc-europe.com
For	Good spec for a budget PC
Against	Poor viewing angle

Price £320 **84%**

CTX F773L

The F773L 17in features CTX's new neon-life visual technology, which incorporates colour enhancement that produces brighter colours and better contrast. The Sharp-Cut Enhancement technology also helps refine the display, and produces a clear and crisp image.

The technical specs are very impressive. The standard native resolution of 1,280x1,024 is used, and the contrast ratio is an impressive 500:1. Although not quite as good as the Sony model, this is more than made up for with the response time of 16ms. Sadly, the viewing angle on the F773L is its major let down, and we noticed a lot of colour distortion very quickly when viewing the display from an acute angle.

The look of the unit is good though, and the base supports the monitor well, making adjustments easy, even one handed, and the built-in speakers add to the positives. It's also slightly cheaper than the Sony model, but of course, you'll have to drop two inches in display size.

Supplier	Dabs.com
Contact	n/a
Website	www.dabs.com
For	Impressive specs
Against	Poor viewing angle

Price £234.94 **89%**

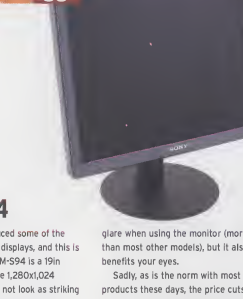
Aries Neoview AL190

The AL190 has a thick surround and a heavy base made of one piece of metal. The screen is supported by a U-shaped chrome bar rising up from the base, which also serves as a useful handle for moving it around. Despite the thick surround, it looks rather good, possibly because there's plenty of screen area to go with it.

The performance is fairly average, with a 400:1 contrast ratio, 25ms response time, and 1,280x1,024 native resolution. The monitor's scaling abilities are very good so all but the most demanding users who need multiple resolutions will be pleased with it. The viewing angle is excellent and brightness is adequate, so it will serve well as a general workstation monitor.

As one of the cheapest 19in models around at the moment, and a quality monitor in its own right, the AL190 gets a definite recommendation. At this price it may be worth buying two for that dual-monitor setup you've always wanted.

Supplier	Savastore.com
Contact	0870 027 0900
Website	www.savastore.com
For	Excellent price
Against	Average performance



Price £469 **83%**

Sony SDM-S94

Sony has long produced some of the most impressive PC displays, and this is no different. The SDM-S94 is a 19in monitor with a native 1,280x1,024 resolution, that may not look as striking as most Sony offerings, but with a contrast ratio of 600:1, response time of 25ms and a respectable viewing angle, this is one of the best monitors around.

The build of the monitor is excellent and the thin surround makes it very compact and easy-to-use in a dual monitor setup. A unique feature of this unit it the special anti-glare coating that not only reduces the amount of glare when using the monitor (more so than most other models), but it also benefits your eyes.

Sadly, as is the norm with most Sony products these days, the price cuts into the unit's appeal, and this isn't a model that everyone will be able to splash out on. This is a big shame really, as for sheer quality and performance, the SDM-S94 is hard to beat.

Supplier	Sony
Contact	n/a
Website	www.sony.co.uk
For	Good quality and performance
Against	Expensive

Price £290.68 **70%**

Philips 190S5CS

Phillips' 19in offering is disappointing given the reputation of the electronics giant. The colour and clarity of the monitor are acceptable, with a 500:1 contrast ratio and a 16ms response time, but the viewing angle is limited, which seems to be the trend for all but the most expensive quick-response monitors. Unfortunately, it doesn't cope well with lower resolutions, and although it scales well to 800x600, at 1,024x768 it looks very bad indeed.

At just over £290, it's a little pricier than some of the 19in LCDs available, but it's certainly not in Sony territory. It also has a light plastic base like many cheaper models. This doesn't mean it's unstable but you will have to grip it with both hands to adjust it.

The Philips 190S5CS is a good enough monitor for standard use, but hard to recommend. The lack of DVI input is also irritating and limits the future-proofing ability of the model.

Supplier	Savastore.com
Contact	0870 027 0900
Website	www.savastore.com
For	Good contrast ratio
Against	Expensive, no DVI input

SPONSORED BY ArmadaComputers.com

Price: £140 89%

Sony DRX-710UL

EDITOR'S CHOICE PC Utilities

Some time back we took a look at the DRX-500UL, Sony's first foray into the external multi-format DVD writing world, and we loved it. Since then, Sony has revised its models, adding new firmware and releasing updated drives. But, with the arrival of the brand new DRX-710UL, the range has truly advanced.

The DRX-710UL is an external dual DVD format drive that can not only handle all of the standard DVD formats you'd care to throw at it, but can also use the new dual layer DVD discs, which can fit up to 8.5GB on one side of a DVD. Burning speeds are typically fast for a Sony model. DVD+R discs can be burned at 16x, while DVD-Rs are processed at 8x. Both DVD-RW and DVD+RW clock in at 4x, while CD-R and CD-RW come in at 48x and 24x respectively. Of course, the dual-layer discs are the main attraction, and the DRX-710UL can burn these new discs at 2.4x. Connection wise, you get the choice of either USB 2.0 or FireWire.

On the performance front, the 710UL is as good as you'd expect it to be, coming from Sony's DRX line. It's fast, quiet, and absolutely no disc errors or the usual handful of niggles were evident in our tests (using a variety of DVD brands). The dual layer performance is understandably slow in comparison to single layer operations, as this is one of the first dual layer drives, but it's still reliable. It is worth noting that compatibility problems may arise in the future when more dual layer disc brands become available, much like standard DVDs in their infancy.

The drive is very bulky, more so than most other external options, but it sits neatly on its side, so it won't take up too much room on your desk. You also get a full version of the disc-authoring powerhouse, Nero 6, with the drive, which is another positive point in its favour.

It would seem as though Sony has done it again with the excellent DRX-710UL. This is an excellent external option, and is certainly one of the best DVD burners available at the moment. And, at the very reasonable price of £140, which is a rarity for such high class drives (particularly when they come from Sony), it's a highly recommended purchase.

Aaron Birch

Supplier	Sony
Contact	0870 511 1999
Website	www.sonyisstorage.com
For	Dual layer support, flawless performance, easy setup
Against	Very chunky, hardly visible LED

Price: £179.99 60%

NISIS Pocket DV H10 Camcorder

Technology is getting smaller all the time and digital camcorders are no stranger to this trend. The NISIS Pocket DV H10 is a small and lightweight camcorder, which is compact enough to slip into your pocket and carry around unobtrusively. It looks great and it's not difficult to imagine it appealing to a wide range of people. After all, you'd be impressed if James Bond had a pocket-size camcorder capable of taking hours of near-DVD quality video. Add to this the fact it's a digital camera, .mp3 player and voice recorder, too, and it sounds even more tempting. However, what could have been great ends up being a big disappointment as the quality of its recordings is a total let down.

The camcorder has a maximum video resolution of 640x480, capturing up to 15 frames-per-second, and as a digital camera it is capable of taking images up to a resolution of 2 megapixel (or up to 4 megapixels with interpolation). It stores data on removable SD memory cards, and you can record around an hour of VGA video on a 256MB SD card. There's even a handy slot under the battery compartment for storing a spare card. When taking video, it is possible to record yourself by rotating the screen 180° using the small dial on the side. It has two bright LEDs for recording video in dark conditions, although they only light up your immediate surroundings and have a tendency to dazzle. It doesn't have an optical zoom, but you can zoom in 4x digitally. It's possible to adjust the exposure, shutter speed and white balance of your images, and select different light meter settings, too. You can also apply filters such as sepia, red, green and blue.

While all this sounds great on paper, the camcorder is significantly let down by poor image quality, particularly when recording videos. Even small movements are blurred and jerky, particularly at maximum resolution. At the lower quality setting, recordings are less jerky but still unacceptably poor with obvious digitisation. Its digital photos are better, but are still prone to blurring if you aren't careful. The main controls on the device are also fairly unresponsive.

There's no escaping the fact you can produce far better videos and take infinitely better photos using a conventional digital camera – you're better off leaving this one alone.

Jake Bickerton

Supplier	NISIS
Contact	01892 722 829
Website	www.nisis.com
For	Very convenient size
Against	Poor quality recordings, no optical zoom

Price £41.13 **76%**

Mercury Wireless Broadband Router KOB WL465

Many people aren't aware that extra equipment is required to enable a broadband connection to be shared by two or more PCs. Unfortunately, this is usually when problems first start, because finding out what equipment you need is confusing to say the least. Gone are the days of straightforward dial-up modems and simple telephone connections that plug straight into your computer. Instead you are confronted with the intimidating world of networks and all the associated jargon that entails. A quick glance at this router's packaging won't make you feel any less confused, either. Instead of a clearly written explanation of what it does, you just get a long list of abstract sounding, odd features such as VLAN Support and DHCP server/client, DNS relay. It's only the name of the device that provides any clues to what it can be used for, and that's pretty much all you have to go on. Fortunately, things improve dramatically when you insert the supplied CD-ROM and take a look at the .pdf instructions. These are written in plain English, with diagrams to help you set it up and a proper explanation of how to share your broadband connection. The task is much more straightforward than you might imagine and by following these instructions carefully you should be up and running with shared broadband in no time.

The router enables you to either set up a cabled connection or a wireless connection. First you have to connect your broadband modem to the router using a network cable. You can then either use network cables to connect up to four PCs to the router (from the Ethernet port on the PC to one of the four LAN ports on the router) or install wireless cards or adaptors to your additional PCs and keep the set up free of cables. The router has a built-in firewall to ensure your connection is secure, whichever method you use, and once your PCs are connected together you can share data as well as your broadband connection.

The router is capable of a data transfer rate of up to 11Mbps. It's good value, is small and unobtrusive, and provides a relatively straightforward solution to your broadband-sharing problems.

Jake Bickerton

Supplier	Mercury
Contact	www.idealcomputing.co.uk
Website	www.kobian.com
For	Relatively straightforward to set up
Against	No printed instructions

Price £79.99 **79%**

Pinnacle PCTV MediaCenter 300i

This all-in-one package from Pinnacle is geared towards turning your standard PC into a full-blown media centre, complete with remote control. Inside the package you get everything you need to enable this media hub on your PC. This includes an analog and digital TV card (DVB-T), a remote control, infra-red sensor and all the required software.

Installing and setting up the device is easy enough. Just slot the card into a spare PCI slot, connect the audio cable to your sound card, plug in the sensor and insert the preferred video connection (Antenna, RCA or S-Video). Once the hardware is fitted and the software installed, you're ready to go.

As well as receiving TV signals (both analog and digital), you can use the device as a set-top box recorder, so you can record anything you watch and play it back whenever you like. Optionally, you can pause live TV, and then start it again when you wish, just like a TiVo or Sky+ box. You can also use the unit to play DVD and VHS videos.

The software used to run the device is easy enough to navigate and the onscreen menus are simple and straightforward; very reminiscent of Windows XP Media Center Edition, in fact. Because of this, controlling your PC via the included remote is easy, though the sensor that comes with the package isn't all that good, and careful placement is needed to get reliable control.

The 300i works very well indeed, and performs all its stated functions admirably. We had no problems getting both terrestrial and cable TV set up on our PC, and recording footage is a painless exercise. The personal video recorder functions are also a boon, giving you the added functionality of the new technology without the added cost of the expensive hardware. However, the big drawback of the 300i is its internal nature, which is more troublesome to install than the huge array of alternative external plug-and-play options currently available. Many people just aren't comfortable cracking open their PCs to fit new hardware, and as external devices are almost as good and just as affordable, there's little reason to opt for this model. Overall, a very good device, but the external route will suit most.

Aaron Birch

Supplier	Pinnacle
Contact	01895 442003
Website	www.pinnaclesys.com
For	Good software, plenty of features
Against	No advantage to the external option, poor sensor

Price £149.95 77%

AIWA UZ-US201

PC speakers aren't something you'd usually choose to have on display, but the striking design of the AIWA UZ-US201 makes them something of an exception. The entire speaker system (three speakers and a subwoofer) is contained within a well built white box, making it look more like a small portable heater or old fashioned radio. Although it may seem an odd idea to design stereo speakers to sit so close to each other, the stereo effect of the speakers is still expansive enough to provide an effective stereo sound. The three speakers are used to position the stereo sound correctly, with sounds traditionally positioned in the centre, such as vocals, benefiting from a dedicated speaker. Bass sounds are also mixed at a suitable level, which is just as well as the subwoofer doesn't have a separate volume control.

Like other sets of standalone speakers, the UZ-US201 has an audio input connection at the back for hooking up to a MiniDisc, CD player, games consoles or whatever. Where these speakers stand out, however, is through the built-in USB socket. This makes it possible to connect them directly to your PC via USB, bypassing your sound card altogether. The audio input at the rear is then free for another device to be connected up at the same time. When the speaker box is connected to more than one source, you can use a small button on a control panel at the side to select which input to listen to. The panel also has a volume control and power switch.

The speakers will automatically turn on whenever sound is detected, and revert to power saving mode whenever sound stops for a significant period of time. The system has a maximum output of 25W, which should be more than adequate for both audio and games. The three speakers are 5W each, while the subwoofer booms out 10W of bass sound.

The sound quality and looks of this set of speakers place it a notch above the competition, but it has an expensive price tag to match. We'd be surprised if many buyers follow the advice in the instructions and hide it behind a TFT screen or laptop screen. Regardless of whether or not this improves sound quality, you are going to want to show these speakers off – especially when you've spent this sort of money on them.

Jake Bickerton

Supplier	AIWA
Contact	0870 168 9000
Website	www.aiwa.com
For	Good looks and sound quality
Against	Very expensive

Price £140 72%

Lexmark P6250

Lexmark has had a turbulent time in the past couple of years. Once known for producing high quality devices and peripherals, it's now seen as lagging far behind Epson, Canon and HP, and many recent offerings have been average at best. So, with this new multi-purpose office solution change this outlook?

The P6250 is a combined printer, scanner and card reader that comes complete with a colour LCD display. Using this display you can navigate through the device's functions and can check on ink levels and other settings. Depending on the mode you select, the display also acts as both a status monitor (displaying print time remaining and so on), and can be used to view images stored on multimedia cards from digital cameras (for direct printing without a PC). On the technical front, the P6250 is a thermal inkjet printer that uses 6-colour cartridges and features a colour print resolution of up to 4,800x1,200dpi, with the scanner reaching a maximum (enhanced) resolution of 19,200x19,200dpi. The card reader supports CompactFlash (Type I and II), Memory Stick Pro (and Duo with the relevant adaptor), MM, SD, SM, Microdrive and xD Picture-Cards.

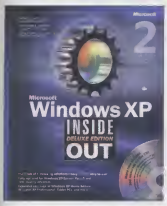
So, how does it perform? Well, it's a classic case of hit and miss really. If you use standard paper, or anything less than premium photo paper, you're going to get below average results that are marred by irritating scan lines. Colours are washed out, and although images are fairly sharp, they're not really useable. Pop in some high quality paper however, and the P6250 radically changes gear, and produces some stunningly high quality images. These aren't perfect, and there's a distinct yellow tinge to images, but the reproduction is very nice indeed. The scanner is a good performer too, and the high resolution scans it produces are impressive, if a little slow when compared to some competing models. We liked the addition of the colour LCD screen, and it's a genuinely useful addition, rather than an attractive gimmick.

If you're willing to use the best paper for your work, and you're not looking for a speedy scanner or printer, you may get on with this. It fairly ploughs through ink though, so you may want to opt for a more resource-friendly model. A definite improvement over previous units, but Lexmark still has a way to go.

Aaron Birch

Supplier	Lexmark
Contact	08704 440044
Website	www.lexmark.co.uk
For	Supports all major media cards
Against	Quality suffers on inexpensive paper

Windows XP Inside Out Deluxe, Second Edition



Given how complex the Windows XP operating system is, it comes as a surprise to many new users that it doesn't ship with a user manual. There's certainly plenty of assistance at hand in the form of the Help and Support Center and Microsoft's online help pages, but there's nothing quite like a weighty instruction book for reference.

Microsoft's Windows XP Inside Out Deluxe Edition is as close as you're likely to get to an official OS manual,

> "If you're looking for a comprehensive guide to XP, you've found it"

and at over 1,400 pages it certainly qualifies as weighty. The latest edition has also been updated to cover the latest XP advancements, including the Tablet PC and Media Center Editions, the 64-bit version of Windows XP Professional and Service Pack 2.

Despite all the new features, Inside Out still begins with the basics of installing and configuring Windows XP. It's certainly not a basic guide though, as everything is covered, right down to command line switches you can use when running the XP installer. It's this breadth of information that makes the book such a useful resource for anyone who likes to know exactly what they're doing when using an operating system. Less experienced users may prefer a simpler book that covers only those areas they are likely to need, but for anyone else, if you're looking for a comprehensive guide to XP, you've found it.

Author	E Bott, C Siechert & C Stinson
Publisher	www.computerbookshops.com
ISBN	0-7356-2043-1
Price	£40.99

88%

The Computer Book – Windows XP Edition

The latest edition of DK's Computer Book also aims to provide readers with a complete guide to Windows XP. Whilst Inside Out revels in technical minutiae, The Computer Book opts for a more accessible, image-led approach, which novice users may find easier to follow.

Rather than sticking purely to Windows XP, the guide skates from subject to subject, dedicating chapters to Word, Excel and Scanners & Printers. As such the book covers a diverse range of how guides and tips from composing emails in Outlook Express and using System Restore, to spell-checking in Excel and brightening images in Paint Shop Pro.

Unfortunately, the breadth of information comes largely at the expense of depth. The Troubleshooting

> "The breadth of information comes largely at the expense of depth"

section in particular is very weak and spends more time stepping readers through XP Troubleshooters than it does dealing with viruses.

Given the book's vague title, it perhaps comes as no surprise the information is also relatively vague, and doesn't go beyond the basics of Windows or PC software. Complete PC novices may find its bright style and screenshot-led content easy to follow, but there are hundreds of better alternatives available and we wouldn't recommend you rely on The Computer Book to boost your PC knowledge.

Author	Richard Gilbert (Ed)
Publisher	Dorling Kindersley
ISBN	1-4053-0689-0
Price	£19.99

63%

PDF Hacks

For files not natively supported by Windows, .pdfs have become incredibly, and perhaps surprisingly, successful. These files' three main attributes – the fact that they display the same on all systems, are generally read only, and also consume very little disk space – make them ideal for product brochures and program manuals alike, which is why you'll find them virtually everywhere in the digital world, both on- and offline.

Beyond their simple, shiny exterior, .pdf files actually have a lot to offer, as PDF Hacks aims to show. This latest release in O'Reilly's Hacks series

> "PDFs aren't the finished article most people think they are"

exposes 100 'industrial-strength' tips and tools designed to help readers customise, index and generate .pdf files in ways you probably never thought possible.

Even if your main experience of .pdf files is simply viewing them, PDF Hacks has useful advice to offer, including how to speed up Adobe's Acrobat Reader and how to successfully convert .pdf documents into Word format. Needless to say, most of the book's contents are aimed at relatively experienced PC (or Mac) users and many require manual coding.

The book's main function is to show readers that .pdfs aren't the finished article most people think they are. Even when saved in .pdf format, there's a lot you can do with these files and with the behind-the-scenes hacks explained here, you should have everything you need to get you started.

Author	Sid Steward
Publisher	O'Reilly
ISBN	0-596-0065-1
Price	£17.50

74%

The Rough Guide to the Internet 2005

A large number of PC users now enjoy the benefits of Net access – either via a standard dial-up modem or faster broadband connection. The terms Internet and email are now comfortably ensconced in all new dictionaries and websites like eBay and Amazon are becoming as widely known as the like of Marks & Spencers or Wal-mart. So given how commonplace the Internet has become, do users really need a guide on all it has to offer? If the latest edition of The Rough Guide to the Internet is anything to go by, the answer to that question is a resounding yes.

Whilst you might expect the book to be a directory of websites, this makes up just a small portion of what's on

> "Over the past few years, the Net has become a very different place"

offer. Inside you'll find information on practically every aspect of Net use, from finding a decent broadband ISP, to searching for information online or setting up your own website.

Over the past few years, the Net has become a very different place thanks to an increase in viruses and spam, the outbreak of phishing scams, and the popularity of blogs and music download sites. The Rough Guide to the Internet 2005 encompasses all these topics, making it much more than a cursory update. Given the mass of bang up to date information the book has to offer, this is a recommended read for Net heads everywhere.

Author	Peter Buckley & Duncan Clark
Publisher	Rough Guides
ISBN	1-84353-338-3
Price	£6.99

82%

You'll need to take command of resistance groups later on in the game

Half-Life 2

After six long years of waiting, the sequel to perhaps the most eagerly anticipated game ever is here, and it more than lives up to the hype.

Set after the first game, players once again step into the HEV suit of the world's most famous crowbar-wielding boffin, Gordon Freeman. After the events witnessed in Black Mesa, the world has become a very different place, and the alien race from Xen (now known as the Combine), has taken control of Earth, much to the dismay of much of humanity. So, as always happens in these situations, a resistance is formed to combat the occupying forces, and you're its newest recruit.

Half-Life 2 is one of the most stunning games ever to grace the PC, not just in looks, but also in terms of gameplay. While not pushing the genre to new areas, the inclusion of an amazing Havok physics engine adds a ton of content to the game. Many puzzles involve the use of objects in the world, and the new Gravity gun can pick up just about anything so you can use normal items as weapons, demonstrating this physics system in an impressive manner. The environments you traverse all make use of the new Source engine, and the detail in both the environments and characters, whose animations can be very realistic indeed, is stunning. You even get to play around with vehicles in the game, and will fight alongside others, commanding your own AI team. Speaking of AI, the enemy is as devious as ever, and you'll have a tough challenge ahead, especially in the later levels.

The Combine have all sorts of technical advantages, such as these blue barriers

A few glitches do abound in the game. As good as the physics engine is, it's far from perfect, and getting stuck on scenery is all too common. The loading times are also far too long, even on a monster system. If you've bought the game from your local shop, you'll still have to activate the game online too, which is an obvious problem to those without an Internet connection.

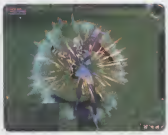
But, despite its problems, there's no denying the greatness of Half-Life 2, and as far as the PC is concerned, this is one of the best games of the year and the best FPS to grace the system.

Use your homing rockets to take down the Combine's gunships

Publisher	Vivendi Universal Games
Website	www.half-life2.com
For	Amazing visuals, superb physics for the most part
Against	Frequent load times
Price	£39.99

96%

Female characters proved to be very popular on the game's servers



While combat may look exciting there's very little player input

Lineage II

Lineage II is the latest in a long line of fantasy massively multiplayer online RPGs. As is usual, you begin by building your character, and as you progress through the game you earn gold you can use to customise your character further with armour and weaponry.

After your training is complete you head off to a village where NPCs will give you various quests to complete. Sadly, it's all pretty vague and you may find yourself not knowing where to go or what to do next. You can only accept quests appropriate to your character's level too, so it can be frustrating trying to find one you can take on. As you get more experience you can team up with other players and try to take a castle. This is a kind of giant scheduled 'capture the flag' session and helps make this game stand apart a little from the RPG pack.

Whatever level you're at though, combat is a rather passive experience - you just click on the character you want to fight, and that's it! The graphics and the music may be impressive but they're simply not enough to make up for the lack of combat input and some very shoddy quest design.

Publisher	NCSoft
Website	www.lineage2.com
For	Some good team play features
Against	Hands-off combat, confusing quests, dull
Price	£39.99

55%

The game's locations are varied and beautifully designed

Talking to NPCs is vital to pick up information, if a little boring

The Moment of Silence

In the early 90s, point-and-click adventure games were all the rage. Just 10 years later though, and hardly any see the light of day, with developers favouring fast action first person shooters or yet more World War II real time strategy games. Digital Jesters has bucked this trend with the release of The Moment of Silence, a traditional adventure game that drags point-and-click gaming into the 21st century.

Set in the near future where alien conspiracy theories and government brainwashing are all part of daily life, the game puts you in the role of Peter Wright whose task is to track down his missing neighbour and uncover The Truth.

Like most such games, The Moment of Silence relies on conversing with NPCs and using items to solve puzzles in order to push the game along. Although it's slow to get started, the dark plot and attention to detail make it a reasonably enjoyable adventure. The puzzles are neither too easy nor too obscure, though there's a lot of backtracking between locations. Whilst it's certainly not up there with the likes of Monkey Island, adventure game stalwarts are sure to enjoy it.

Publisher	Digital Jesters
Website	www.digitaljesters.com
For	Good visuals and voice acting, complex plot
Against	Very slow paced
Price	£29.99

72%

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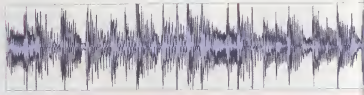

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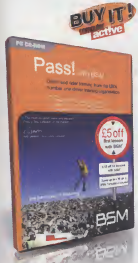

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*Keith Cameron - Road Safety Consultant

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*Refers to previous version 2004

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For the avoidance of doubt the free blank DVD offer will not be available after the 31st March 2005.

Coverdisc explorer

With over 500 programs to get your teeth into, you'll want to get started with our coverdisc right away. Here's what this issue has to offer

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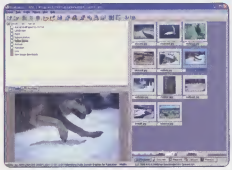
Easy Password Manager 1.18SE 88
Keep all your passwords in one secure, central location, rather than trying to remember each one.

PicaLoader 1.30SE 89
Grab whole batches of images from a given site on the Internet using this handy automated download tool.

IconCatcher 3.1 90
Track down all the icons hidden away on your system and make use of them in your own CD projects.

MaxiVista 1SE 90
Double your available onscreen space by sharing your desktop with a second PC or laptop.


PicaLoader

Graphics: Brush Strokes Image Editor

Windows 91
Put yourself in complete control of Windows with these superb tools, including a useful program for previewing files in Windows Explorer.

Internet 94
Get the most out of the Internet, email and networking – includes a tool for backing up your Microsoft Outlook email messages.

Security & antivirus 96
Stamp out viruses and keep your data safe – including the latest update to AVG Anti-Virus Free Edition.

Graphics 97
Exercise your creative muscles – features a great freeware image editor.

Audio & video 98
Get the most from your PC's multimedia setup – includes a powerful application for ripping audio CDs.

Miscellaneous 99
While away the hours with the latest freeware games and synchronise Outlook and mobile phone contacts.

Coverdisc listing 96
The complete guide to all the programs on both of this month's PC Utilities CDs.

Miscellaneous: Sygi.mobile

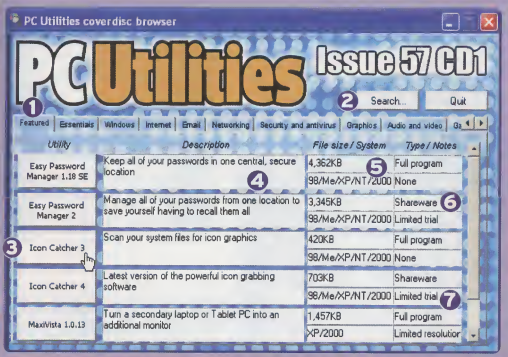
How to get started

step 1 *Insert the disc in your PC's optical drive and it should launch automatically. If nothing happens, browse the disc for the browser.exe program and double-click it. Click on the browser tabs to choose a category, and click on the program's button on the left to start the installation.*

step 2 *If the program is in a .zip archive, you'll see a warning about the need for an archive manager. With programs like WinZip you can normally double-click the setup.exe file to start the installation, though in some cases you will need to extract the contents to your hard drive.*

step 3 *If you have a particular type of utility in mind, you can click the Search button. If you're looking for .mp3 utilities, for example, type 'mp3' into the box and remove the tick in the Find whole word only box. To search for a particular utility, tick the box and type in the program title.*

Get to know the PC Utilities coverdisc browser



1 Browser tabs The programs on the PC Utilities disc are split into various categories. If you're looking for music programs, for example, you'll find them under the Audio and video tab.

2 Search The easiest way to find a specific type of program is by clicking the Search button and entering your search term. Search results will be displayed on their own tab.

3 Program name These buttons can be clicked to install the related software (if in .exe or .msi format) or launch the relevant .zip archive.

4 Description This field provides a brief description of what the program does. In some cases, you will also find important information, such as a program unlock code.

5 System This field lists the operating systems under which the program should work. Although we try to provide accurate information, we cannot guarantee that a program works for a given OS even if listed here.

6 Program type Most tools on the CD are unlimited full programs or freeware. Shareware software can be run for a limited period only, after which you will need to register the software to continue using it.

7 Notes Any restrictions in the use of the software will be listed here. In the case of shareware, this may include the length of the trial period.

Coverdisc helpline

01625 855051

techsupport@livepublishing.co.uk (Monday-Friday 10am-4pm) Helpline for coverdisc problems only

Problem solving

If you're having a problem with a particular program on our coverdisc, please view the help file in the program for assistance. You might also consider visiting the website of the program author for further help. If this fails, please email techsupport@livepublishing.co.uk or post a message on our online forum at www.pc-utilities.co.uk.

If you are having problems with the CD, first check that it is not dirty or scratched. CDs can be cleaned by holding them under the cold water tap and gently rubbing the silver side with a tissue. Dry it carefully with another tissue.

If the disc still doesn't work at all then it may be faulty. Faulty discs should be returned to PC Utilities, Live Publishing International Ltd, Europa House, Adlington Park, Macclesfield, Cheshire, UK, SK10 4NP. We will replace all genuinely faulty discs.

PC Utilities wants your programs

We are always on the lookout for new programs to feature on the PC Utilities coverdisc, and if you've written your own software tools then we want to hear from you. In order to get your programs considered for inclusion on our coverdisc, pack up your program in a .zip file and email it to **disc.submissions@livepublishing.co.uk**. If your program is larger than 10Mb, either provide us with an FTP/HTTP download link or send your program(s) to us on a CD to the usual address (mark the package Coverdisc Submissions).

With every program you send to us, please include a brief synopsis of what the utility does, along with information on its system requirements and license (freeware, shareware etc). Due to the time it takes to scan files for viruses and check for compatability, we cannot guarantee when a program will feature on our coverdiscs, or that it will be included at all.

Disclaimer

Some of the programs on the PC Utilities disc interact with your PC on a fundamental level and we strongly advise you back up your personal data before using the disc. Because of the way the PC Utilities disc is compiled, PC Utilities, Live Publishing International Limited and/or any associated company and/or individual cannot take responsibility for damage to your PC or otherwise arising from use of the coverdisc. You use the programs on the disc at your own risk.

US information

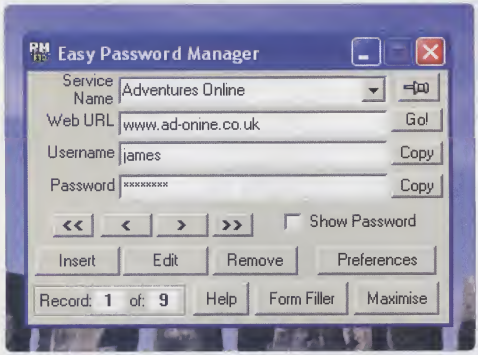
US Law only allows you to make one backup copy of any software or media, for personal and archival purposes only. This is the sole intended purpose of the copying and extraction software supplied on the coverdisc. Any other use is strictly prohibited and we will not be held responsible for misuse of any included program on the disc.

Windows 95

Please note that we do not guarantee any of these programs will work under Windows 95. You should however find that a large proportion of 98-compatible programs also work under 95.

Easy Password Manager 1.18SE

Keep your all-important logons and PIN numbers safe and sound with this secure management tool



Easy Password Manager's main component is the Password Manager

It also includes the Form Filler for use when filling in all types of online applications and orders

It seems as though the whole world is being password protected, with more and more services requiring the use of secure logons, secret phrases, PIN numbers and security codes than ever before. It's no longer just cash machines or bank accounts that need you to enter secret passwords – phone services (such as banking and bill paying), digital TV features and, of course, the Internet, all require this information. Then there's the recent upsurge of the new range of chip and PIN credit and debit cards, all adding to the mass of codes we need to remember on a daily basis.

Easy Password Manager is tool that will make remembering and using these Internet-related passwords much easier, so you'll no longer be left fumbling around for notes on bits of paper. After you've set up your own account within the program, you can use it to store any number of password records, each containing the name of the service, the website link and the username and password. With the click of a button you can go to a site, and you can quickly enter your password to logon. You can either drag and drop the required information to its destination, or you can click the Copy button to apply the information to the Windows clipboard.

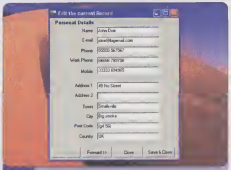
Also included in Easy Password Manager is the very handy Form Filler module. This is a separate window in which you can enter your personal information, such as name, email, address and credit card info. Then, if you visit a new site that requires the filling out of a form, you can do so without typing a thing – just drag and drop data into each field.

To keep all of this sensitive information safe, Easy Password Manager is locked with password access, so nobody will be able to see your data. And, should you need to, you can set up multiple accounts, meaning that every member of your family can have their own records, complete with their own form filler data.

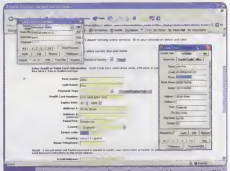
Location	\Featured\EPMv1SE-SetupFiles.zip
File size	4,362KB
System	98/Me/XP
Notes	Full version
Limitations	None
Contact	www.passwordmanager.co.uk

Use Easy Password Manager

step 1 *You'll first need to set up an account and then enter some details into the various fields. Run the program and select the option to create a new account. Once done, click the Insert button on the Password Manager window and enter in the relevant details.*



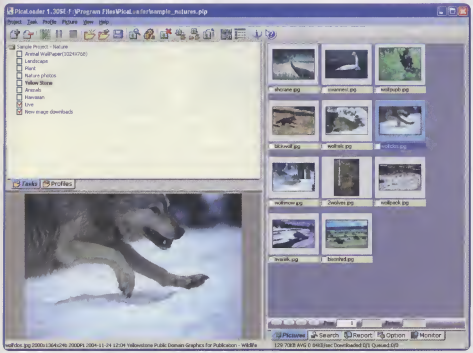
step 2 *Setting up the Form Filler is much the same, although for most users, a single range of details will be suitable (you can set up more than one using the Insert button). Fill in the field under each tab (Name Info, Credit Cards and Misc), and you're ready to go.*



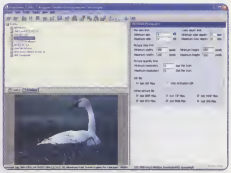
step 3 *You can now use Easy Password to fill out online forms and to easily remember passwords. To use this function, simply drag and drop the needed info from the program's fields into the fields on the form. Even asterisked passwords can be used in this way.*

PicaLoader 1.30SE

Scour the Internet and download whole collections of pictures with this automatic image grabbing tool



The program's image browser makes managing images easy



You can set up various profiles to limit the types of image PicaLoader downloads

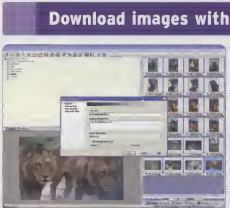
There are many professions and hobbies that require the use of images, and as the Internet is such a large repository for image files, it makes sense to spend time browsing though sites in order to find a specific shot. Artists often use this as a form of inspiration, and designers may be on the look out for royalty-free artwork for their projects. Optionally, you may simply want to find some attractive wallpapers for your desktop. There is a problem with this image searching though – size. The Internet is huge, and it'll take a long time to find a site that has items you can use. Then you'll need to download each file, adding more time onto the process.

PicaLoader is a very useful aid to anyone who needs to find images online on a regular basis, and it can be used to automatically grab whole site of image files in one go. By creating different profiles within the program, each consisting of internet addresses and other user-defined information, the program is able to connect to a website and can grab all the image files it finds, saving them to your hard disk.

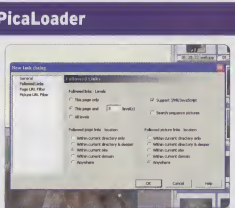
Downloaded files are saved into project folders, keeping everything in order, and there's a built-in picture viewer that lets you scroll through and manage your downloaded items. Enhancing its usefulness further, PicaLoader is able to search for images through numerous levels of links. This means that the program will automatically follow links on the site to other locations and will search for images there as well. So if you're on an image site that has other useful links, you can search them too, without even visiting them. PicaLoader can also perform multiple searches at once, all you need to do is create a number of projects and then select them all. Once you click the start button, the program will process all of your jobs at once. So, if you're in need of a fast and efficient way of downloading collections of images, give PicaLoader a go.

Location	\featured\plse_pcu.exe
File size	1,453KB
System	98/Me/XP
Notes	Full version
Limitations	None
Contact	www.vowsoft.com

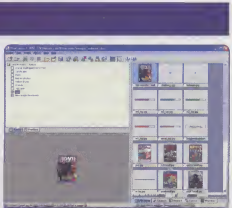
Download images with PicaLoader



step 1 *PicaLoader has several readymade profiles already available, but to create your own, click the New Task button. A dialog will open up. Here you need to name the profile and specify the website address to download from. Enter these and then click Followed Links to the left.*



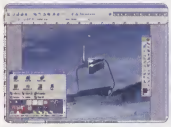
step 2 *In this new dialog you can set the number of link levels PicaLoader will try to download from. The more links the program tries, the longer the search will take. So, it's best to limit this number. Select This Page And, then enter the number of levels you wish to search.*



step 3 *Take a quick look through the other options and select those that apply to you and then click OK. Once the dialog is closed, select the profiles you wish to run and then click the green play icon on the main toolbar. PicaLoader will now grab the images from the profile you set up.*

Icon Catcher 3.1

Create your own free icon collection with this powerful icon scanner



You can create your own icons by capturing areas of your screen

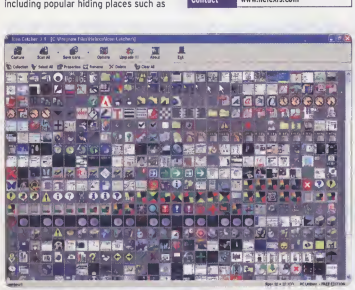
Every time you add a shortcut to your desktop, it is automatically given the same icon as the program used to create it. This is fine when you only have a few shortcuts, but becomes annoying when you have lots of shortcuts which all have the same icon, for example Word documents or .mp3 files. Instead of having to put up with difficulties differentiating between your shortcuts, it is possible to change the icons assigned to each one. You can purchase icon collections for this task, but you're better off saving money and using Icon Catcher to scan your hard drive for icons you already have. The program will find hundreds of icons hidden away in various files and folders, giving you an instant, free collection.

You wouldn't necessarily be aware of how many icons exist on your hard drive by simply browsing its contents. Icon Catcher, however, is able to dig out hidden icons in a wide variety of files, including popular hiding places such as .dll, .exe and .scr files. A scan of your hard drive is sure to produce enough icons to keep you happy but if you still feel the need to create a batch of new icons the program has a screen capture tool, too. This enables you to convert anything shown onscreen into yet another icon to add to your collection.

Upgrade offer

If you find the full version of Icon Catcher 3.1 useful you'll be pleased to know you can now upgrade to Icon Catcher 4 for half price (US$9.97 instead of US$19.95). To take advantage of this offer, simply click on the Upgrade! button within the program. The latest version of Icon Catcher 4 is now faster and has an improved interface. It also includes a number of new features, such as drag and drop support and extended filtering options to enable the selection of icons by colour, resolution or size. A feature-limited version of Icon Catcher 4 is on this month's coverdisc in the Featured folder so you can try it out for yourself.

Location	\featured\iconcatc3_pcutilities.zip
File size	420KB
System	98/Me/XP/NT/2000
Notes	Full version
Limitations	None
Contact	www.helexis.com



A scan of your hard drive will reveal hundreds of 'hidden' icons

MaxiVista 1 SE

Use an old monitor or laptop as a second screen without installing an additional graphics card

Maxivista enables you to use two screens at the same time

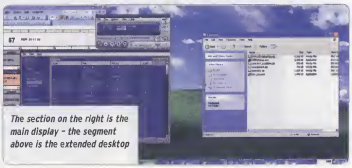
MaxiVista SE is an unusual tool that creates a dual screen display without requiring any additional video hardware, enabling you to link up your laptop and desktop PCs, for example, and work with two screens. The program installs a virtual video card onto the main computer to fool Windows into believing an additional monitor display has been installed. You can then take advantage of the built-in multi-monitor capabilities of Windows and extend your desktop to an additional screen. The only requirement is that your machines are linked via a standard connection network, but the program minimises CPU and network load so even video playback runs smoothly across the network.

With a second display you can do things such as edit a document in full screen and drag and drop information from another program without having to switch Windows. You could also speed up the process of learning how to use a new piece of software by running help tutorials on one screen and following the instructions in the full-screen application in the other display.

Location	\featured\maxivista.zip
File size	1,457KB
System	XP/2000
Notes	Full program
Limitations	None
Contact	www.maxivista.com

Configuration

The first thing you have to do to set up MaxiVista is to install the server program (setupMaxivistaSE.exe) on your primary PC. Once installed, your primary machine will now be ready to scan for the secondary display. Next you need to install and run the viewer program (setupSEViewer.exe) on the PC which is to act as the secondary display. As soon as you run the viewer program you should immediately benefit from a dual-screen display. While you're making use of a second display the Taskbar icon will change to green. MaxiVista SE limits the screen resolution on the second display to VGA (640x480) and only works with two screen displays at the same time. To get hold of a version that supports up to 1,900x1,200 and software to add additional screens to treble or even quadruple your display, visit www.maxivista.com.



The section on the right is the main display – the segment above is the extended desktop

TextMe

Search for the .txt files on your PC as you would normally in Windows

Once your text files have been located, drag them over to the TextMe viewer

Most applications come with a readme.txt file, which provides a brief overview of the features of the software and the changes that have been made since the last version. If you browse through your different program folders you'll probably find a large collection of these text files, most of which will be full of useful information. Unfortunately, many people ignore the files, or are unaware of their existence in the first place. The situation isn't helped by the fact that it takes a bit of effort to track them down. To make things easier it is possible to group all your text files together using TextMe.

This is a very straightforward program that consists of just two panes. On the left is a list of your text files, and you can view the contents of the selected file in the pane on the right. The easiest way to add more text files to the program is to drag and drop them onto the TextMe window. If you first search for all the .txt files on your computer (using My Computer or Windows Explorer) you can then drag the search results into the program and quickly create a one-stop-shop for all the text files on your machine.

Location	\windows\textme.zip
File size	46KB
System	98/Me/XP/NT/2000
Notes	Freeware
Limitations	None
Contact	www15.brinkster.com/pmchapman

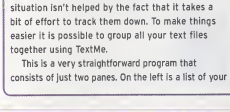
Meta Commander Pro

Gain easy access to your files and folders from the right-click menu

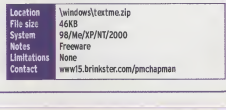
This useful desktop enhancement puts all your files and folders at your fingertips via the Windows right-click context menu. To view the contents of your drives, you simply have to click on the drive letter and then on the folder of your choice. When it reaches the end of the subfolder line, the program displays categorised lists of the files contained. The categories include useful sections such as images, executable programs and text documents.

Location	\windows\MetaCommanderSetup.exe
File size	725KB
System	98/Me/XP/2000
Notes	Shareware
Limitations	15-day trial
Contact	www.desktopboosters.com

StartUp Watchdog



StartUp Watchdog produces a clear list of the applications that start up with Windows



You can find out more about any program by clicking on What is it?

It's a fact of PC life that your system will increase in bulk and decrease in speed with continued use. The speedy, streamlined operating system you first installed gets bogged down by endless applications and processes and quickly begins to limp along tediously, suffering under the weight. To put a spring back into its step you should spend some time ridding it of many of the unnecessary bits and pieces that are dragging it down. An obvious place to begin is to take a look at what loads up with Windows. Clearly it's fine to allow your antivirus software to fire up memory resident processes if necessary, but it's a different matter if a load of obscure programs you no longer use are needlessly taking up a valuable chunk of RAM.

To find out what programs start up with Windows, all you need to do is run StartUp Watchdog. This also provides information about what each one does. It's then up to you to choose which items should stay the same, and which to kill off. While using your PC, if any application (such as a virus or spyware tool) tries to modify your startup list, StartUp Watchdog immediately alerts you to what's happening so you can instantly stop it.

Location	\windows\WatchdogSetup.zip
File size	938KB
System	98/Me/XP/NT/2000
Notes	Freeware
Limitations	None
Contact	www.adaptives.com

Personal Reminder

While you're spoilt for choice when it comes to reminder programs, they usually have a very similar set of features and are ultimately just a subtle variation on the same theme. It's refreshing, therefore, to come across one that attempts to add a fresh twist to the usual format.

Personal Reminder stands out because, as well as enabling you to keep track of your appointments, it also enables you to start up any program of your choice as part of your reminder. This could come in useful if you plan to start working on a specific program at a certain time of the day. By setting a reminder you'll hear an alarm at the designated time and the program will be loaded up and waiting for you when you get to your machine. It's also possible to use Personal Reminder to shut down your PC or log you out of Windows at scheduled times. In this way you can ensure your PC is never left on all night by mistake, unnecessarily wasting energy resources. The only downside to the program is that its interface looks quite dated and uninspiring. However, its useful features more than make up for this.

Location	\windows\PersonalReminderEnglish.exe
File size	448KB
System	98/Me/XP/NT/2000
Notes	Freeware
Limitations	None
Contact	www.melchart.com

rndNoter

rndNoter is a simple notepad program that you can use to jot down any sudden flashes of inspiration that spring to mind before you forget them. It sits in the System Tray and uses very little system resources. When you want to type in a note just open up the small window and add it to your collection of ideas.

Location	\windows\rndNoter.zip
File size	221KB
System	98/Me/XP/NT/2000
Notes	Freeware
Limitations	None
Contact	www.rndware.info

Folder Creator

If you want to create a large number of folders at the same time, it's worth making use of the Folder Creator program. It makes new folders and names them either after filenames in a chosen directory or names defined in a text file. You can exclude the extension from the folder names so they don't end up with strange names.

Location	\windows\FolderCreator4.0.exe
File size	964KB
System	98/Me/XP/NT/2000
Notes	Freeware
Limitations	None
Contact	http://home.tiscali.no/tonyhome/

BackUp Maker

This powerful software makes it possible to create a backup of your files in .zip format and export it directly onto CD or DVD. You can back up a large amount of data by spanning your archive onto several discs. It's simple to set up backup tasks as the program is based around easy-to-follow wizards.

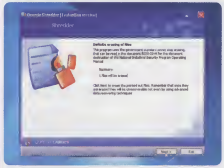
Location	\windows\bkmaker.exe
File size	1,750KB
System	98/Me/XP/NT/2000
Notes	Freeware
Limitations	None
Contact	www.ascomp.net

IntelliPointer

IntelliPointer is a clever piece of software that makes it more comfortable to use your mouse by cutting down on the amount of hand movements you need to make. It enables you to move your pointer with a small, slow movement of your hand and eliminates the need to lift or reposition your mouse.

Location	\windows\IntelliPointer-M.exe
File size	744KB
System	98/Me/XP/NT/2000
Notes	Shareware
Limitations	30-day trial
Contact	n/a

Quemix Utilities 2004



The file shredder ensures deleted files and folders can never be restored

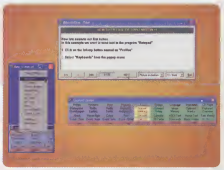
Clear space on your hard drive with the disk cleaning utility

Even though Windows is equipped with a collection of system tools, some features are notably absent. There's nothing, for example, that will shred deleted files beyond recovery or clean up the registry. It's possible to add these and many other enhancements with the aid of shareware and freeware tools, but it's time consuming to install the different programs required. Quemix Utilities simplifies the process by collecting together 10 enhancements in one suite.

These tools add the missing components mentioned above (a file shredder and registry cleaner) along with a generous selection of additional enhancements. There's a disk cleaner for removing junk files, a file encryption tool to protect against unauthorised access to your files and folders, an Internet firewall (less essential now Windows has an adequate built-in option) and privacy enhancement software for when browsing the Web. Quemix Utilities also comes with a memory optimiser, a tool for repairing hard disk partitions and a Web accelerator for increasing the speed of the Internet. All of the components of the program are straightforward to use, partly thanks to each one having a well designed, user friendly interface.

Location	\windows\QU3.exe
File size	7,078KB
System	XP
Notes	Shareware
Limitations	14-day trial
Contact	www.quemix.com

remotekeys



There are a number of easy-to-follow tutorials to help you get started

Assigning remotekeys is just a matter of clicking on the onscreen keyboard

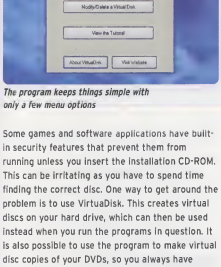
Most people regularly repeat tasks when working away on their PC – completing Internet forms with the same information or inserting the same text into emails, for example. For each of these repetitive tasks, you can save time and effort by assigning remotekeys to do it for you.

Remotekeys works with over 350 pre-written commands, which you can trigger in any sequence. These commands perform set tasks such as inserting the date, opening programs, and inserting Excel formulas. By stringing them together you can devise an automated way to perform repeated tasks. If there are no commands available to perform the actions you require, it is possible to record your own using remotekey's macro recorder.

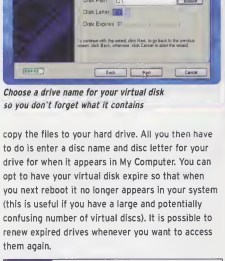
A timer is provided to enable you to trigger remotekeys at pre-set times. This means you don't even have to be using your machine to trigger the commands. You can, for example, schedule time consuming tasks such as virus scans for when you aren't using your machine. The program has slots for over 2,500 automated tasks, and the program stays in the system tray so you can immediately trigger any of the tasks at any time.

Location	\windows\RemoteKeys.zip
File size	1,553KB
System	98/Me/XP/NT/2000
Notes	Freeware
Limitations	None
Contact	www.freewarehits.de

VirtuaDisk



The program keeps things simple with only a few menu options



Choose a drive name for your virtual disk so you don't forget what it contains

Some games and software applications have built-in security features that prevent them from running unless you insert the Installation CD-ROM. This can be irritating as you have to spend time finding the correct disc. One way to get around the problem is to use VirtuaDisk. This creates virtual discs on your hard drive, which can then be used instead when you run the programs in question. It is also possible to use the program to make virtual disc copies of your DVDs, so you always have instant access to high quality versions of your favourite films.

Setting up a virtual disc is a straightforward process. After you've inserted a disc, press Create a New Virtual Disk and follow the prompts in order to copy the files to your hard drive. All you then have to do is enter a disc name and disc letter for your drive for when it appears in My Computer. You can opt to have your virtual disk expire so that when you next reboot it no longer appears in your system (this is useful if you have a large and potentially confusing number of virtual discs). It is possible to renew expired drives whenever you want to access them again.

Location	\windows\virtuadisksetup.exe
File size	562KB
System	XP/2000
Notes	Shareware
Limitations	Limited trial
Contact	http://virtualwareproducts.com

ExplorerView

The play bar appears when you click on a music file and enables you to preview .mp3w

It's even possible to watch video clips from within Windows Explorer

Windows Explorer doesn't have any built-in previewing features beyond displaying thumbnails of your image files so you usually have to track down files manually. This is OK if you know the name of the file you are looking for, but when you want to find a specific file but aren't sure of its name, it becomes a real problem. You are left with no choice but to load up different files individually in the hope of eventually tracking down the one you're after.

The obvious solution is to add previewing features to Windows Explorer, and ExplorerView does just this by extending the previewing options of Windows Explorer to enable the playback of music and video files. With this aid of ExplorerView you can preview more than 30 media file types directly from Windows Explorer. Once you've got used to the new improved Windows Explorer it's difficult to go back to the previous incarnation.

The full version of ExplorerView normally costs US$27 but PC Utilities readers can take advantage of a special half price offer to get the software for only US$13.50. To receive ExplorerView for the discounted price, visit **www.explorerview.com/pcu.html**.

Location	\windows\ExplorerView-Setup.exe
File size	5,760KB
System	XP
Notes	Shareware
Limitations	30-day trial
Contact	www.explorerview.com

Compare and Backup

Compare and Backup is a useful file archiving tool that compares the contents of two directories before performing a backup. It tells you which files are newer or older than the destination copies and indicates where only the size of the file has changed. You can then use the information to decide which files to back up.

Location	\windows\cb_setup.exe
File size	1,167KB
System	98/Me/XP/NT/2000
Notes	Shareware
Limitations	Limited trial
Contact	www.backupsoft.net

goBCL Remote

If you want to host files on the Internet you should first convert them to a Web-friendly format. goBCL Remote is a file converter for converting to .pdf or .html formats. The program enables you to submit Word and Excel documents to an online file-processing engine for instant conversion.

Location	\windows\goBCL.exe
File size	1,220KB
System	98/Me/XP/NT/2000
Notes	Freeware
Limitations	None
Contact	www.bcltechnologies.com

Calc Prompter

The Windows Calculator is one of the most commonly used PC applications, but it isn't ideal for complex calculations. A more appropriate solution is to use a text-based calculator such as Calc Prompter, which enables you to type in complicated expressions. It has a built-in error recognition system to verify your entries.

Location	\windows\calc-prompter-setup.exe
File size	190KB
System	98/XP/2000
Notes	Freeware
Limitations	None
Contact	www.softaddress.com

FreeUndelete

Many undelete programs require you to pay a fee in order to recover your files. FreeUndelete, as its name suggests, is a rare breed - a free data recovery program! It lists the deleted files it is possible to recover then all you have to do is select the files of your choice and press undelete.

Location	\windows\freeundelete.exe
File size	714KB
System	XP/NT/2000
Notes	Freeware
Limitations	None
Contact	http://officerecovery.com

MsgSave

READER SUBMISSION

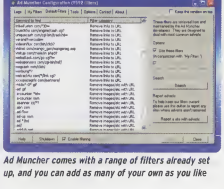
Amongst the most important items to back up before you set about formatting your system, or for archival purposes, are your email messages. Most people have hundreds, if not thousands of important messages on their system from past conversations, and losing them can be a huge problem, especially in a business environment, where the emails may need to be referred to in future for legal purposes. For this reason, you should make sure you keep the contents of your mail boxes safe.

MsgSave is a useful addition to Microsoft Outlook that enables users to save out the email client's .msg files in bulk to various locations, including to a recordable CD, secondary hard disk, removable storage or to a remote location across your network. The program can use a customisable naming format for archives (including name, date sent and suchlike), messages can be renamed even after backed up, and the backup process is started with a simple button click. The program can be accessed from an icon on the main Outlook toolbar, ensuring that backup capabilities are close by at all times.

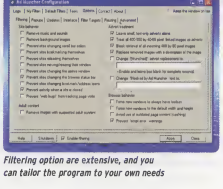
Location	\email\msgsave_v4.exe
File size	3,074KB
System	98/Me/XP/NT/2000
Notes	Shareware
Limitations	14-day trial
Contact	www.msgsave.com

Ad Muncher

READER SUBMISSION



Ad Muncher comes with a range of filters already set up, and you can add as many of your own as you like



Filtering option are extensive, and you can tailor the program to your own needs

Everyone hates it when their night time TV viewing is disturbed by that unexpected knock at the door, followed by the dreaded line "Are you the home owner?" Not only is this incredibly irritating, but it's also an unwelcome intrusion into your personal time. So why then, should you have to put up with the same thing online?

Enter, Ad Muncher, an internet browser add-on that can eliminate, or at the very least reduce, this slew of online junk, thus making your browsing experience enjoyable once again. Ad Muncher can block adverts in practically all browsers and can also block annoying pop-up adverts. Potentially irritating site behaviour is also taken care of (such as websites that try to alter your browser view, toolbars etc) and there's a caching system that will help pages load up faster. Ad Muncher can even be used to block adverts in chat clients, such as ICQ.

One of the key elements to Ad Muncher's success is the long that has been spent developing, tweaking and refining its advert filtering system. This definitely shows when using the program, and its accuracy in stopping unwanted content is very good indeed.

Location	\internet\ntsend.exe
File size	178KB
System	98/Me/XP/NT/2000
Notes	Shareware
Limitations	30-day trial
Contact	www.admuncher.com

URLBase

URLBase is an in-depth bookmarking tool that can be used to import and export your Internet Favorites and other information to other browsers. You can quickly and easily back up all of your links for safe keeping or you can share them with others online. There's also an email option that lets you send your data to others as HTML format.

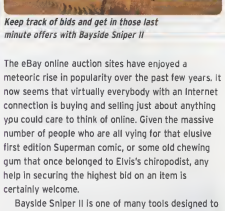
Location	\internet\urlPersonalsetup.exe
File size	1,547KB
System	98/Me/XP/NT/2000
Notes	Freeware
Limitations	None
Contact	www.terriadev.com

ToolBarCop

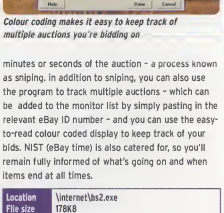
There are numerous additions for Internet Explorer, such as the Google Toolbar, eBay tools and news tickers. These are useful, but sometimes they can cause problems or be hard to get rid of. ToolBarCop takes care of this and lets users remove unwanted items themselves. You can also remove BHOs and can view details on installed add-ons.

Location	\internet\toolbarcop.zip
File size	62KB
System	98/Me/XP/NT/2000
Notes	Freeware
Limitations	None
Contact	http://windowsxp.mvps.org

Bayside Sniper II



Keep track of bids and get in those last minute offers with Bayside Sniper II



Colour coding makes it easy to keep track of multiple auctions you're bidding on

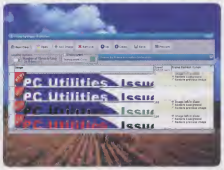
The eBay online auction sites have enjoyed a meteoric rise in popularity over the past few years. It now seems that virtually everybody with an Internet connection is buying and selling just about anything you could care to think of online. Given the massive number of people who are all vying for that elusive first edition Superman comic, or some old chewing gum that once belonged to Elvis's chiropodist, any help in securing the highest bid on an item is certainly welcome.

Bayside Sniper II is one of many tools designed to help you do just that, and is a great tool for any avid eBay purchaser. As mentioned in the program's name, Bayside Sniper II is able to help you win the bidding war by placing new bids in the closing minutes or seconds of the auction – a process known as sniping. In addition to sniping, you can also use the program to track multiple auctions – which can be added to the monitor list by simply pasting in the relevant eBay ID number – and you can use the easy-to-read colour coded display to keep track of your bids. NIST (eBay time) is also catered for, so you'll remain fully informed of what's going on and when items end at all times.

Location	\internet\bs2.exe
File size	178KB
System	98/Me/XP/NT/2000
Notes	Shareware
Limitations	Limited trial
Contact	www.sheaware.com

Banner Maker Pro

The tabbed interface makes creating banners a very easy task



Animating banners can be created by using the step-by-step animation creator

Banner adverts are one of the most widely used and popular forms of advertising on the Internet. Unlike pop-up adverts, banners are integrated into the page, making them much less distracting and irritating than pop-ups, and the last thing you want to do is alienate your potential customers before they've even visited your site.

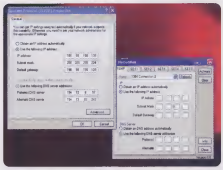
Given how widespread banner advertising is, if you want to advertise your own site, it's a good idea to make your own banners so that you can distribute these to relevant sites to help drive up Web traffic.

Banner Maker Pro is a good choice of tool for the creation of banners as it makes it easy for even the most artistically challenged user to get creative. The program can be used to create a whole range of banner ads, complete with animations and a range of text and image effects. The whole creation process is handled via an easy-to-use interface that uses drag-and-drop functionality to manipulate the items on the banner. Once complete, the banner can be saved out as standard .gif or .jpg formats, and then used in the usual way.

Location	\internet\bmpro6.exe
File size	4,015KB
System	98/Me/XP/NT/2000
Notes	Shareware
Limitations	15-day trial
Contact	www.bannermakerpro.com

NetSetMan

Keep five different network connections ready and waiting on your system



The information needed is exactly the same as Windows' own TCP/IP

If you're a laptop user who is always on the move, travelling all over the world on business, you'll no doubt have to keep switching between different networks in order to get online. You may have a connection at home, one at the office, another at a distant branch of your company or at head office, and so on. On a more basic level, you may even have more than one Internet connection set up at home, catering for dial-up and broadband.

In these situations, NetSetMan is a great time-saving tool that enables the easy switching of network connections on a system, without having to keep entering different connection details, as you would normally.

Once installed, you run the program and then set up your different account details (up to five accounts are permissible per machine). This information includes all of the usual configuration details, such as your IP address, subnet mask, DNS and gateway. Each setup is then saved in its own tab, meaning all you have to do is click a tab and then activate the account. The network configuration will be automatically updated, and you'll be online again in no time.

Location	\networking\netsetman_100.exe
File size	545KB
System	XP/2000
Notes	Freeware
Limitations	None
Contact	www.itecnix.com

Buddy Spy

If you're a user of Yahoo! Messenger and you like to keep track of your buddies – whether they want you to or not – then this is a tool for you. Buddy Spy lets you see what your friends are doing and if they're online, even if they're in invisible mode and you can also see which chat room they're in.

Location	\internet\BuddySpy2.zip
File size	112KB
System	98/Me/XP/NT/2000
Notes	Freeware
Limitations	None
Contact	www.unsakred.net

NET Clipboard

This is a unique tool that enables the Windows clipboard to be shared across a network. Systems with the program installed can exchange clipboard data via a server/client relationship and can send plain and HTML text. IP security is also offered, which can be used to control access to your clipboard and can disable clipboard sharing.

Location	\internet\NetClipboard.exe
File size	704KB
System	XP/NT/2000
Notes	Freeware
Limitations	None
Contact	www.kctoolbox.tk

MessenPass

All chat programs use password locked accounts, which is great for security, but not so great if you forget your logon. MessenPass is a simple tool that is able to recover passwords from a range of popular chat clients, including Yahoo!, MSN Messenger, ICQ, AOL Instant Messenger, Trillian and Miranda.

Location	\internet\NetClipboard.exe
File size	83KB
System	98/Me/XP/NT/2000
Notes	Freeware
Limitations	None
Contact	www.nirsoft.net

SPAMFiler ISP

SPAMFiler ISP is a very powerful front-end spam application for email servers. The program can scan all incoming messages, checking them against black and white lists, and will deal with them according to the administrator's rules. The program will run on both Windows and Linux, and is geared towards larger networks.

Location	\email\SpamFilter.zip
File size	5,463KB
System	NT/2000
Notes	Shareware
Limitations	Limited trial
Contact	www.logsat.com

Blue Tango

Blue Tango is a text scrambling application that can be used to jumble text in a variety of documents such as letters, emails and chat clients. If you're worried about people reading your email, or looking at your work when you're away from the PC, simply scramble the text until you return, at which point you can restore its readability.

Location	\security and antivirus\BlueTango04.zip
File size	4,303KB
System	98/Me/XP/NT/2000
Notes	Shareware
Limitations	Limited trial
Contact	www.highermath.com

JAP – Anonymity and Privacy

JAP is an internet security program that will keep your IP address and your PC's details hidden from others. When in operation, the program issues you with a single static IP address that is shared with other JAP users, meaning that you'll be safe from prying eyes.

Location	\security and antivirus\japsetup.exe
File size	371KB
System	98/Me/XP/NT/2000
Notes	Freeware
Limitations	None
Contact	http://anon.inf.tu-dresden.de/index_en.html

Ashampoo IP Spam Blocker

If you've yet to upgrade to Windows XP Service Pack 2, you may still be bothered by Windows Messenger pop-ups appearing onscreen, offering university diplomas or less savoury deals. If so, you should install and run this useful tool. Its sole purpose it to eliminate IP messaging spam, letting you use your PC in peace.

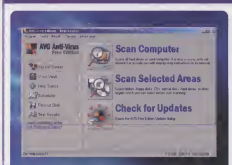
Location	\security and antivirus\ashampoo_ip_spam_blocker_fe.exe
File size	457KB
System	98/Me/XP/NT/2000
Notes	Freeware
Limitations	None
Contact	www.ashampoo.com

Access Boss

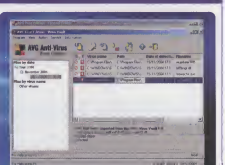
If sharing the family PC causes plenty of arguments in your household, then you'll be glad to find Access Boss. Using it you can preset access times for each user, and can give each person the same amount of PC usage, making sure everyone gets access to the computer fairly.

Location	\security and antivirus\aboss.zip
File size	753KB
System	98/Me/XP/NT/2000
Notes	Freeware
Limitations	None
Contact	www.fsproo.net

AVG Anti-Virus 7 Free Edition



AVG Free Edition delivers commercial quality protection without the cost



The Virus Vault displays all of the infection previously detected and removed

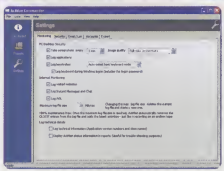
Grisoft's antivirus suite, AVG, is very popular, not only because it's a very reliable and efficient antivirus application, but also because of the dependable freeware version.

AVG possesses all of the features you expect to see in an antivirus suite, and using it you can perform a full in-depth system scan. The scanner will check every area of your system, including boot records and memory, and you can select specific areas of your PC should you only need to check a single drive or folder. As with previous versions, AVG includes a file vault where it can safely store troublesome infections, and there's an online updater that will keep you up to date with the latest threats. Additional features in AVG Free Edition include the ability to create an emergency rescue disk that will recover your system in worst case scenarios.

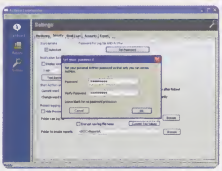
AVG is one of the best freeware antivirus applications around at the moment, and has a level of protection that has won it several awards, including accolades from Virus Bulletin. If your PC isn't protected against viruses and you can't afford to buy an antivirus tool, install AVG Free Edition right away.

Location	\security and antivirus\avg70free_289a392.exe
File size	9,919KB
System	98/Me/XP/NT/2000
Notes	Freeware
Limitations	None
Contact	www.grisoft.com

ActMon Computer and Internet Monitoring



You have full control over the logging abilities of ActMon from the control centre



To keep things totally secure you can password protect both the program and the logfiles

ActMon Computer and Internet monitoring is, not surprisingly, a tool for keeping tabs on the all the activity that takes place on your PC. The suite consists of a detailed logging system that will record what happens on your computer in numerous ways. Once installed, you will need to run the program to set up the various options, and then it will run quietly and invisibly in the background, making sure that no one is aware of its presence.

While running, the ActMon program can monitor a system by keeping track of which programs are run, what Internet sites are visited, instant messaging or chat activity and even individual keystrokes thanks to the included keylogging tool. It's not just activity logging included in the program either, as you can set ActMon up to take screenshots at certain periods, which will then be saved into a secret location. Logged information and screens can be viewed locally later, or you can set the program to email you information to a specified address. Should you need to keep tabs on an employee or if you want to monitor your children's PC use, ActMon is ideal.

Location	\security and antivirus\actmon-setup.exe
File size	1,600KB
System	98/Me/XP/NT/2000
Notes	Shareware
Limitations	Limited trial
Contact	www.actmon.com

Brush Strokes Image Editor

Distortions enable you to stretch any part of your image to create the desired effect

There are many filters you can apply to completely change the look of your photos

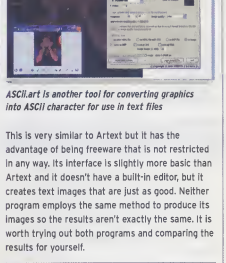
Although you can choose from a wide variety of different image editors, most only offer similar features you've probably seen a dozen times before. Inevitably, you have to spend a lot of money to get the very latest image editing tools and the most impressive effects. Brush Strokes, however, attempts to redress the balance by offering up the sort of features usually reserved for off-the-shelf packages for free.

It's taken over a year to put together, and the effort has definitely been worth it. As well as all the standard tools you'd expect (magic wand selections, rotations and sharpen/blur), Brush Strokes adds a selection of professional tools including a brush for painting and filling using an existing image. It also features a .gif animator and a series of powerful, yet easy-to-apply distortions and camera filters.

It's possible to capture images or frames of video directly from your digital camera, or you can simply work on your existing image files. Even though Brush Strokes offers up a plethora of potentially bewildering tools it's surprisingly straightforward to use and it won't take you long to feel at home with the program.

Location	\graphics\brush.zip
File size	607KB
System	98/Me/XP/NT/2000
Notes	Freeware
Limitations	None
Contact	www.pabird.supanet.com/~pabird/freesoftware/

ASCii.art



ASCii.art is another tool for converting graphics into ASCii character for use in text files

This is very similar to Artext but it has the advantage of being freeware that is not restricted in any way. Its interface is slightly more basic than Artext and it doesn't have a built-in editor, but it creates text images that are just as good. Neither program employs the same method to produce its images so the results aren't exactly the same. It is worth trying out both programs and comparing the results for yourself.

Location	\graphics\ascliart-0.4-en-beta.zip
File size	103KB
System	98/Me/XP/NT/2000
Notes	Freeware
Limitations	None
Contact	http://reactor.reality-protocol.de/

Artext Personal Edition

READER SUBMISSION

With Artext you can convert a normal coloured photograph into coloured text

The program features an image editing section for resizing your images

If you want to create a truly unique and attention-grabbing image, then you may want to give Artext a try. This clever program turns your photos into text-only images made up entirely of suitably coloured lines of text characters. At first glance the resulting image may look the same as if you've applied a strange effect, but on closer inspection you will be able to clearly make out and read the text. Images are formed by stringing together the same line of text over an over again, with subtle changes being made to the text colour to portray the tones and colour of the original photo.

After you've entered the text you want to use to make up the image, it is possible to choose the typeface and the size of the font. By altering the font used by the program you change the look and feel of the final outputted image. Before you convert the image it should first be resized. For best results, make it 100 pixels wide. Artext has a built-in image editor so you can resize your images from within the program. The images produced by the program are unique and memorable and a sure-fire way to surprise someone when they suddenly get the message.

Location	\graphics\APD 15times trial.zip
File size	1,981KB
System	98/Me/XP/NT/2000
Notes	Shareware
Limitations	15-use trial
Contact	www.artext.co.uk

Awicons Lite

Awicons Lite is an advanced icon editor with a wide variety of effects and design tools. To create a new icon, stretch and rotate an image file to fit the edit area. You can then add the finishing touches by altering the brightness and saturation and applying various blur and shadow effects.

Location	\graphics\awiconsilitesetup.exe
File size	1,526KB
System	98/Me/XP/NT/2000
Notes	Freeware
Limitations	None
Contact	www.awicons.com

Image Comparer

When working with graphics files you can quickly end up with a collection of duplicate images cluttering up your hard drive. This impressive software tracks down identical images in different formats, sizes and resolutions. It also displays the degree of similarity between images so you can find copies of images that have been amended.

Location	\graphics\ic_setup.exe
File size	978KB
System	98/Me/XP/NT/2000
Notes	Shareware
Limitations	30-day trial
Contact	www.boildesoft.com

1337Player

Despite it's geek-speak name, this is in fact a standard audio and video player for Windows. However, unlike many of the alternatives on offer, 1337Player features full support for DirectX 9 technology. It's also able to use subtitles, and zoom and fast seek capabilities alongside the usual media player tools.

Location	\audio and video\1337player.exe
File size	170KB
System	98/Me/XP/NT/2000
Notes	Freeware
Limitations	None
Contact	www.daansystems.com

DivXLand Subtitler

This is an excellent time-saving video subtitle application that lets users apply subtitles to movies on the fly. Subtitles can be instantly viewed, and features include automatic timing ilmit, easy caption editing and varying caption modes. The program is also standalone, and no installation is required.

Location	\audio and video\DivXLand_Subtitler.zip
File size	111KB
System	98/Me/XP/NT/2000
Notes	Freeware
Limitations	None
Contact	www.divxland.org

MP3FE

If you'd like to add a little multimedia presentation to your own .mp3 CDs, then MP3FE should be useful. Using this creative app, you can construct your own custom front end GUIs for your .mp3 CD-ROMs. You can use your own graphics and album covers etc, so you'll have a truly personal audio disc.

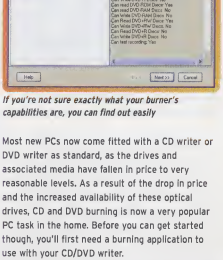
Location	\audio and video\mpfe144m.zip
File size	426KB
System	98/Me/XP/NT/2000
Notes	Freeware
Limitations	None
Contact	www.mp3fe.com

PyroDVD

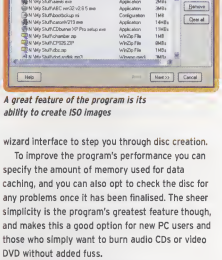
PyroDVD is a streamlined DVD player that enables you to view movies on your PC. Along with all the usual DVD playing features, the program is able to reveal hidden Easter eggs by emitting a beep when over invisible buttons, and it also supports user defined keys. A link to a third party DVD codec (required) is also featured.

Location	\audio and video\pyrodvd_130.exe
File size	659KB
System	98/Me/XP/NT/2000
Notes	Shareware
Limitations	Limited trial
Contact	www.pyrosoftware.net

Easy Audio/Data CD/DVD Burner



If you're not sure exactly what your burner's capabilities are, you can find out easily



A great feature of the program is its ability to create ISO images

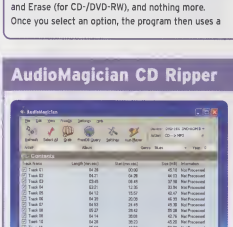
Most new PCs now come fitted with a CD writer or DVD writer as standard, as the drives and associated media have fallen in price to very reasonable levels. As a result of the drop in price and the increased availability of these optical drives, CD and DVD burning is now a very popular PC task in the home. Before you can get started though, you'll first need a burning application to use with your CD/DVD writer.

Easy Audio/Data CD/DVD Burner is about as simple and easy to use as things come. The application itself is a small toolbar that contains the different functions – Audio CD, Data CD, Build Image and Erase (for CD-/DVD-RW), and nothing more. Once you select an option, the program then uses a wizard interface to step you through disc creation.

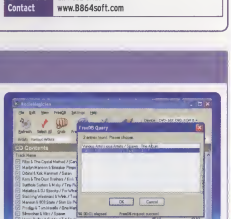
To improve the program's performance you can specify the amount of memory used for data caching, and you can also opt to check the disc for any problems once it has been finalised. The sheer simplicity is the program's greatest feature though, and makes this a good option for new PC users and those who simply want to burn audio CDs or video DVD without added fuss.

Location	\audio and video\CDburn.exe
File size	1,600KB
System	98/Me/XP/NT/2000
Notes	Shareware
Limitations	Limited trial
Contact	www.B864soft.com

AudioMagician CD Ripper



Insert an audio disc, select the tracks you want to encode and then click Grab



FreeDB makes getting album and track information much easier

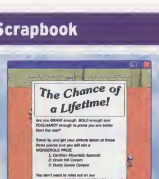
Whether you listen to your music collection via a PC media player like Winamp or Windows Media Player, or prefer to tune in when you're out and about with a portable .mp3 player, the first step it to convert your tunes to digital format. AudioMagician CD Ripper is a fast and easy to use CD-ripping program that can grab tracks from an audio CD and encode them into .mp3 or .wav formats. The encoder used is based on the Lame MP3 Encoder, which is one of the fastest available at the moment, and means you can grab whole CD in a shorter time than alternative titles.

Multiple CD drives can be selected from the drop-down list on the main screen, and AudioMagician has full support for ID3 tags, so you can enter information about each track. The Internet music database, FreeDB, is supported, so you don't have to spend ages entering individual track and artist details, and can instead grab the whole album listing in one go. Of course, the .mp3 encoder can be configured to encode at different bitrates for varying quality and file sizes, and the whole program uses a straightforward Windows XP-style interface.

Location	\audio and video\audiomag.exe
File size	1,750KB
System	98/Me/XP/NT/2000
Notes	Shareware
Limitations	30-day trial
Contact	www.audiomagician.com

EarthBound: Summer Vacation Scrapbook

You'll need to use the environments to your advantage in order to progress through each level



How can you pass up a challenge like this? Go on, get going!

EarthBound: Summer Vacation Scrapbook is a cartoon-style platform game that's clearly inspired by the likes of Nintendo's classic Super Mario Bros and, of course, EarthBound. School's out, and it's summer holiday time, but rather than sitting around all day watching inane TV shows, you decide to enter a competition to take three difficult photos. This inevitably leads to a platform spree through several levels, avoiding traps and defeating enemies along the way.

One of the game's most interesting and impressive features is the way it uses the game's environments to create puzzles. Your character can jump from wall to wall, and can grip onto ledges to reach higher places. Some walls can be rebounded off, while some cannot. This means you have to carefully think about how to progress through the stage, rather than bounding about at random. There are also Mario-style blocks that collapse or change the layout of the level, further enhancing the challenge. Climbing can be a little tricky at first, but once you get used to the controls, this is very entertaining and colourful diversion.

Location	\games and leisure\EBSummer2.0.zip
File size	1,710KB
System	98/Me/XP
Notes	Freeware
Limitations	None
Contact	www.starmen.net

Snoopy's Super Escape

This Snoopy-themed title sees Charlie Brown's faithful friend escaping from the evil Red Baron. After jumping out of the Baron's plane, you need to free fall towards the ground before opening your Woodstock chute and landing safely on your kennel in order to score points for each jump.

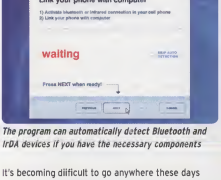
Location	\games and leisure\SS_escape.zip
File size	1,140KB
System	98/XP/2000
Notes	Freeware
Limitations	None
Contact	n/a

Super Secret Ninja

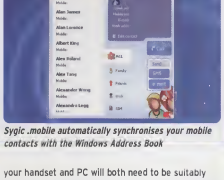
Super Secret Ninja is a simple but addictive little game in which, in the role of the titular hero, you have to reach the end of each level by jumping and swinging past the ever watchful guards using your ninja rope. You have a strict time limit, which decreases even faster when a guard sees you, so be stealthy!

Location	\games and leisure\ninja.zip
File size	54KB
System	98/Me/XP
Notes	Freeware
Limitations	None
Contact	juuso.salonen@hut.fi

Sygic .mobile



The program can automatically detect Bluetooth and IrDA devices if you have the necessary components



Sygic .mobile automatically synchronises your mobile contacts with the Windows Address Book

It's becoming difficult to go anywhere these days without seeing someone or other talking, texting, playing games or taking photos with their mobile phone. Being able to communicate with people around the world no matter where you happen to be is extremely useful and undeniably popular. With phones getting smaller all the time though, using SMS functions and managing your contacts list isn't always as easy as you might like it to be. With Sygic .mobile on hand though, you can access and manage most of your mobile's contacts and messaging functions from the comfort of your PC desktop using your keyboard and mouse.

The program is designed to operate in conjunction with Bluetooth- or IrDA-enabled mobile phones, so your handset and PC will both need to be suitably equipped to communicate with each other. Assuming you have the relevant technology, you can then use .mobile to type SMS messages, place calls, synchronise your contacts list and much more. SMS messages can be diverted directly to your desktop, so you don't need to touch your mobile at all, which may prove particularly useful if your office frowns upon personal phone use.

Location	\misc\mobileDesktopSetup.exe
File size	4,243KB
System	98/Me/XP
Notes	Shareware
Limitations	Limited trial
Contact	www.sygic.com

Free Notes

If you ever have difficulty remembering appointments or you often forget about the small tasks of the day, then Free Notes will be of use. Using this small application you can create multi-coloured notes on your PC, which will display right away, or can be set to appear at set times to remind you.

Location	\misc\freenotes.zip
File size	666KB
System	98/Me/XP/2000
Notes	Freeware
Limitations	None
Contact	www.freebienotes.com

WinMacro

Macros are very useful functions in programs such as Microsoft Excel or Word, and thanks to this program, they can prove just as useful within Windows too. Using it you can record anything you do on the desktop and save it as a macro. Once done, you can execute these actions with a single button press.

Location	\misc\WinMacro_v1_21_exe.zip
File size	57KB
System	98/Me/XP/NT/2000
Notes	Shareware
Limitations	Limited trial
Contact	http://jeocities.com/win_macro

Coverdisc listing

Featured

Utility name	System	Notes	Description
Easy Password Manager LJB SE	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Full program	Keep all of your passwords in one central, secure location
Easy Password Manager 2	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Limited trial	Manage all of your passwords from one location
Icon Catcher 3	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Full program	Scan your system files for icon graphics
Icon Catcher 4	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Limited trial	Latest version of the powerful icon grabbing software
MaxiVista 1.0.13	XP/2000	Full program	Turn a secondary PC into an additional monitor
PicaLoader 1.30 SE	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Full program	Download and manage any number of pictures from the Web

Essentials

Utility name	System	Notes	Description
bxAutoZip for Outlook	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Automatically zip up attachments to email messages
coTree Standard	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Create a tree-style catalogue of all your CDs and their contents
DeepBurner	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Create your own CD and DVD compilations
DeepBurner Pro	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Limited trial	Burn CDs/DVDs and automatically back up your files
Doc Memory	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Test your system's memory for errors
DVD to MP3	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Limited trial	Rip audio tracks from DVD movies to .mp3 format
EVE	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	A simple and unbelievably compact vector graphics editor
gPopper	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Send and receive Gmail using any email program
HideOE	98/Me/XP/2000	Free	Minimise Outlook Express to the System Tray
Lookout	XP/2000	Free	Search all your email in seconds from directly within Outlook
MAPLab NNTP	98/Me/XP/2000	30-day trial	Read newsgroups in Outlook just as you can in Outlook Express
MemTest	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Thoroughly test your PC's memory for errors
Memtest86	98/Me/XP/2000	Free	Standalone memory diagnostic that runs from CD
Portable Firefox	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Set up a version of Firefox that runs from a flash USB drive
Portable Thunderbird	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Set up a version of Thunderbird that runs from a USB drive
Ultra-DVD2MP3	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Limited trial	Encode DVD audio streams into .mp3 format
VLC media player	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Play multiple formats of audio and video files including DVDs
WebMon	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Check an unlimited amount of webpages for updates
WordPipe	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Limited trial	Find and replace across huge batches of files

Windows

Utility name	System	Notes	Description
A43 File Management Utility	98/Me/XP/2000	Free	Manage all the files on your system
AbcMover	98/Me/NT/2000	Limited trial	Record and replay your everyday activities
Abe Tax Tif View	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Limited trial	A fax and .tif viewer for your PC
Active Tray	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Limited trial	Open documents, websites and programs with a single click
ActiveLaunch Lite	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Quickly open applications, documents and folders
ActivePrinter	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Limited trial	Quickly change which printer is active from the System Tray
ActiveStartup	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Limited trial	Manage programs which load via the registry
AdvaHist Eraser	98/XP/2000	Free	Erase usage traces from Microsoft applications
Advanced RunAs	XP/NT/2000	Limited trial	Use the command line to start applications with user credentials
Advanced System Cleaner	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	20-day trial	Rid your system of junk files, unnecessary registry entries
Airway Sync	98/Me/XP/2000	Free	Quickly and easily synchronise files on different machines
AtomTime Synchronizer	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Limited trial	Keep your PC clock accurate with this program
AutoHotKey	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Create shortcut keys supporting both mouse and keyboard macros
Autolt	98/Me/NT/2000	Free	Automate your commonly practiced tasks
AutoShutdown	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Limited trial	Set your system to shut down automatically
Backup Maker	98/Me/NT/2000	Free	Automatically back up your important files to .zip archives for transfer to CD/DVD - see page 92 for more details
BatchFlexZTif	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Convert all your fax documents to .tif images
BOV Notepad	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Ditch Notepad for this more advanced alternative
BtiCrypt Free	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Encrypt text within bitmap images
Bus Hound	98/NT/2000	Limited trial	View low level input and output from storage devices
Calc Prompter	98/XP/2000	Free	Find solutions to complex expressions with this text based calculator - see page 93 for more details
Cleanreg	98/NT	Limited trial	Scan the registry for dead files
ClipPath	98/XP/NT/2000	Free	Copy the path of a file to the Windows clipboard
Coffeecup Free Icon Studio	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Icon editor and manager program for Windows
Compare & Backup	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Limited trial	Compare source and destination files before you do any copying - see page 93 for more details
Datanation Shutdown Utility	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Limited trial	Make your computer turn itself off at pre-determined times
OFlinc Backup Home	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	A personal backup program for Windows
Directory Lister	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Quickly list the contents of a folder in a text or HTML file
Easy Watermark Creator	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Limited trial	Add watermarks to your digital images
Error Nuker	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Limited trial	Scan the Windows registry and fix invalid entries
Examine (32-bit)	98/NT	Limited trial	Search text and binary files as well as files within .zip archives
ExplorerView	XP	30-day trial	Instantly preview video and audio files from within Windows Explorer - see page 93 for more details
ExplorerXP	XP/2000	Free	Use an alternative file explorer with a tabbed interface
Ez Wizard	98/NT/2000	Free	Manage your monitor's power
EZMem Optimizer	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Free up system memory when resources start to get tight
Fast Note	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Write small virtual notes to stick on your desktop
File Association Manager	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Limited trial	Manage Windows file type associations
File Commander	98/Me/XP/2000	Free	Save and run Windows' explore, copy and paste operations
File System Watcher	XP/2000	Limited trial	Monitor files on NTFS systems for modifications
FlexMenu	98/Me/NT/2000	Free	Raise your work productivity
Folder Creator	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Create large numbers of folders based on file names or the contents of a text file - see page 92 for more details
Free Launch Bar	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	A handy replacement for the quick launch bar
freeCommander	98/Me/NT/2000	Free	An easy-to-use alternative to the Windows file manager
FreeUndelete	XP/NT/2000	Free	Find and recover accidently deleted files with this free program - see page 93 for more details
FreshUI	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Configure and optimise your entire system
Gentle Reminder	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Replace the sticky notes on your monitor with virtual versions
goBCL Remote	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Convert various documents into .pdf or HTML formats - see page 93 for more details
Handy Password	98/Me/NT/2000	Free	An easy-to-use password manager
Horodruin	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	A file synchroniser that can handle two or more folders
IntelliPointer	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	30-day trial	Reduce strain and movement when working with the mouse pointer - see page 92 for more details
ISAAnalyzer	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Document objects in an ISA server
Journal Macro	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Limited trial	Create macros to automate repetitive tasks
Kiltapps	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Limited trial	Keep students away from launching non authorised programs
Kronos	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Schedule reminders with Kronos
LXCopy	XP/NT/2000	Limited trial	Back up or copy all files
ManageDesk	98/Me/XP/2000	Limited trial	Apply changes to your multiple virtual desktops
Meria Commander Pro	98/Me/XP/2000	Limited trial	Manage files and folders and run applications with a single click - see page 91 for more details
NOFF	XP/2000	Free	Perform extra fast file searching on your local NTFS partitions
OnHand	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Assign hotkeys to start applications or open documents
overclockulator	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	See how much wattage your system uses
Partition Boot Manager	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	30 day trial	Boot up to 256 distinct operating systems partitions
PasswordDetecter	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Limited trial	Record all keystrokes on your PC
PGP Editor	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Limited trial	Change the content of existing .pdf files
Personal Reminder	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	A handy reminder tool for Windows that enables you to schedule Windows shutdown times - see page 91 for more details
Picture of the Day	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Automatically download images as a desktop wallpaper
pspad	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	A replacement for Notepad with useful features for programers
Pixel Port	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Limited trial	Magnifier, colour pickes, ruler and protractor
Point Position	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Pick the coordinates and colour for any point onscreen
Process Supervisor	XP/NT/2000	Limited trial	Monitor and manage processes with this program
Quemix Utilities 2004	XP	Limited trial	Keep your PC running at top speed with this startup manager, registry cleaner and more - see page 92 for more details
Registry Checkup	98/Me/XP/2000	Limited trial	Locate and fix Windows registry problems
Registry Clean Expert	Me/XP/2000	Limited trial	Clean the registry with this small tool
Registry Defragmenter & Compactor	98/Me/NT/2000	Limited trial	Rebuild and reindex the Windows registry
Registry Finder	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Limited trial	Search for entries in the Windows registry

Utility name	System	Notes	Description
Registry Healer	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Limited trial	Scan your registry for orphaned file and folder references
Registry Workshop	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Limited trial	Modify Windows registry keys and values
RegWorks	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Limited trial	A comprehensive registry management tool
RemoteKeys	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Replace complicated keystrokes with easy-to-remember automatic macros - see page 92 for more details
Restart	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Automatically shut down and reboot your PC
Restoration	98/Me/XP/2000	Free	Undelete files dumped from the Windows Recycle Bin
Right Click Image Converter	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Limited trial	Convert between image formats
River Past Talkative	98/XP/2000	Limited trial	Text-to-speech software that can record to .mp3, .wav, or .wma
rndNoter	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Jot down your flashes on inspiration before you forget them - see page 92 for more details
Safe XP	98/XP/2000	Free	Improve your system security with this handy program
screenMX	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Limited trial	Convert your Flash files into a screensaver
Shredit	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Limited trial	Erase data from your PC completely
SimplPrompt	XP/2000	Limited trial	Give a command to your computer from a tailored interface
SimplyZip	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Create and manage file archives in a wide variety of formats
SoftInfo	XP/2000	Free	Identify what hotfixes are installed on your system
Startup Watchdog	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Monitor all of the programs that autostart during Windows startup - see page 91 for more details
SmallInDisk	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	14-day trial	Hide any application or folder with this program
StrokeIt	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Control programs by drawing symbols with your mouse
TextMe	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Compile all of the .txt files on your system into a drag-and-drop Notepad database - see page 91 for more details
TypeRecorder	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Limited trial	Record and save everything you type to a daily file
Uninstall Ability	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Uninstall problem programs to keep your PC spic and span
VirtualDisk	XP/2000	Limited trial	Create virtual drives on your computer so you don't need to keep discs in your CD drives - see page 93 for more details
WatchDirectory	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	45-day trial	Execute commands automatically
Whats Running	XP/2000	Limited trial	Find out what applications and processes are running
Windows XP AVI Fix	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Prevent Windows XP from locking .avi files
Windows XP/2000/NT Key	XP	Free	Retrieve your Windows password with this password tool
WinDriver Expert	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Back up a driver or several drivers with this tool
Wood Workshop	XP/2000	Free	Create seamless wood textures for your desktop. It comes with over 100 preset textures
xplorer2	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Limited trial	Explore your files with this dual-pane file manager with folder tabs and more

Internet

Utility name	System	Notes	Description
911 Smart Protector	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Erase your Internet history, cache and cookies
Absolute Time Corrector	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Limited trial	Synchronise your local PC time using this tool
Ad Muncher	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	30-day trial	Remove annoying pop-ups and banner adverts in browsers and file-sharing programs - see page 94 for more details
AG-Paypal	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Limited trial	Add a PayPal affiliate scheme shopping cart to your website
Ain Ad Hack	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Remove all adverts from the latest version of AOL Instant Messenger (AIM)
AIM-Patcher	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Configure AOL instant Messenger to remove ads, change the colours and so on
Alexa Booster	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Limited trial	Increase your website's page rankings
AM-DeadLink	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Root out dead links and duplicates from your bookmarks
AmiPic Lite	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Limited trial	Locate interesting pictures, movies and .mp3s on the Net
AptPassport	98/Me/NT/2000	Limited trial	Store your passwords and automatically log onto websites
AutoWeb	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Execute webpage or Web-based scripts
Banner Maker Pro	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Limited trial	Create internet banners with this easy-to-use application - see page 95 for more details
Bar Graph MOI	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Browse the Web using General Reuse Markup Language
Bayside Sniper II	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	10-day trial	Track eBay auctions and snipe at the last minute to bag the items you want - see page 94 for more details
BeFaster Lite	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Limited trial	Speed up your internet connection
Bookmark Buddy	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Limited trial	Manage your bookmarks and site logins
Buddy Spy	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	See what your Yahoo! buddies are doing online - see page 95 for more details
CacheSentry for IE	98/Me/XP/2000	Free	Improve the caching capabilities of Internet Explorer to accelerate your browsing speeds
Captain Mnemo Pro	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Limited trial	Easily store your passwords without having to remember each one yourself
ChatBlocker	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Moderate and restrict chat conversations with this tool

Utility name	System	Notes	Description
CheckURL	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Check that all the links on your website work and produce a report of your findings
CleanMOCache	XP	2-user limit	Clean up browser tracks in Internet Explorer, Mozilla, Netscape, Firefox and Opera
Cookesys Internet Newswire	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Create and manage a custom news service
Color Wheel Expert	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Limited trial	Create Web safe colour palettes to create better looking sites
CookieCooker	98/Me/2000	Limited trial	Protect yourself against snooping on your internet habits
GigiMode Browser	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Spyware-proof Web browser with audio capabilities
Easy Message Express	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Chat with all your friends with this instant messaging utility - supports ICQ, MSN, AOL and Yahoo messengers (adware)
eXactMapper Lite	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Create a professional site map for your website without writing a single line of code
ExoSee	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Peer-to-peer file sharing program
Expired Domains	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Find expired domains that are still listed
FAQTool	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Update your FAQ in minutes
FeedEdit	98/XP/2000	Free	Edit and create RSS feeds - either import existing feeds or start from scratch
Flash Favorite	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Limited trial	Save Flash files to your hard drive
Free Online-meter	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Record your usage of the internet
Get IP	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Show your hostname, IP address and port when online
GetFileSize	98/Me/XP/2000	Free	Retrieve file sizes before you begin downloading
Gqsearch	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Search tool for use with Google
googDATA	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	A small and smart toolbar to manage all your personal data
GreenBrowser	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	A multiple windows browser
Grouper	XP/2000	Free	Share media files legally and safely within private groups using encrypted P2P software
Headlines MGI	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	A GRWL Web browser for your PC
Homepage Protector	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Prevent your browser's homepage from being changed
Host File Checker	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Remove duplicate entries from a host file
HTML Color Tunes	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Design and manage your webpages
HTML Compress	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Squeeze white space out of your HTML files to keep them trim
HTML Quick Edit Bar	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Edit the current HTML page and FTP it to your website
I`m InTouch	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Limited trial	Interact with your desktop PC
iCal Web Calendar	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Schedule meetings, vacations and other events
IE QuickStart	98/Me/NT/2000	Free	Automate the opening of multiple webpages
IESecure	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Close a security hole recently found in Internet Explorer
IISGate	XP/NT/2000	Limited trial	Try this advanced authentication system for Windows
Image Search	98/NT/2000	Limited trial	Search for graphics files
Internet Connection Counter	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Display statistics about your internet connection with this tool
IP Discoverer	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Get information about your IP and your public IP
IP Monitor	98/NT/2000	Free	Ping hosts with this program
IpMaster	98/Me/XP/2000	Limited trial	Monitor incoming or outgoing data packets using your internet/network connection
KUNO Browser	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Create, compile, run and debug Web macros
LanRaptor	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Search your LAN for packets and addresses, and manage them
IISShield	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Protect IIS from known or unknown HTTP attacks
Local Website Archive	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Quickly save and archive a completed webpage with all images
MesNews	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	View newsgroups with this feature-packed newsreader
MessenPass	98/Me/NT/2000	Free	Recover passwords for most instant messaging programs with this tool application - see page 95 for more details
MetaTagDummy1	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Grab the keywords used in the top webpage results
ModemLockDown	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Disable access to the internet until a supervisor or parent is present to enter a correct password
Mozilla Firetox	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Surf the Net with this great alternative to Internet Explorer
myFavorites	98/Me/2000	Free	An easy-to-use Internet manager
Navioscope	98/NT	Free	Speed up your internet use with these browser enhancements
netoscope	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Limited trial	Monitor Net services including Web, FTP and email servers
NoPopups	Me/XP/2000	Free	Eliminate Internet Explorer pop-up windows before any bandwidth is used
OE Quick Tools	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Handle your Outlook messages with ease
Paypal Alert	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Monitor your PayPal account balance from your desktop
PopKiller	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	A simple pop-up killer for your Internet connection
Popup Windows Blocker	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Block pop-up windows when browsing the Net
Proxy Probe	XP/2000	Limited trial	Find the fastest servers, and check for online anonymity
Quick 'n Easy FTP Server	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	FTP files with ease
RealThumbnails - Thumbnails creator	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Limited trial	Create thumbnails for your Web images

Utility name	System	Notes	Description
RSS Xpress	98/XP/2000	Free	Read RSS feeds and atoms using this feature-laden yet compact viewer
Sandboxie	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Run Internet Explorer so all changes are kept in a sandbox
Scripted	XP/2000	Free	Create and edit HTML and PHP files
SERanker Pro	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Limited trial	Find out your website's ranking with this tool
SNMAPT Port Mapping	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Limited trial	Access computers and devices in a LAN or WAN or Internet
Speed4Web	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Limited trial	Speed up and test your Internet connection
Surf Assistant	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Limited trial	Save and sort your favourite sites for easy access
Surfpack Startpage	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Build an HTML page with this program for Windows
The Easy Bee	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Limited trial	Easily browse to your favourite websites
Toolbar Shopper	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Search up to five search engines and remove personal information form online caching
ToolbarCop	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Take full control of your toolbars with this application - see page 94 for more details
Torrent Search	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Search for all types of media with this program
Tree MDI	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	A GRNU Web browser program with history
Turbo Torrent	98/Me/NT/2000	Free	Share large files with your friends via the BitTorrent network
Tweaking Toolbox XP	XP	Limited trial	Tune up the Windows XP operating system (includes 14-day trial of more advanced features)
UptimeTracker	XP/2000	Limited trial	Get alerted when a computer is not responding
URLBase	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Manage your Internet Bookmarks and Favorites manager and export them to other browsers - see page 94 for more details
urlStart	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Surf the Web faster with this program for Windows
ValloCam	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Limited trial	Capture multiple webcam images with this program
WebChecker	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Monitor your websites and set your own criteria
webcow	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Download all files off a website with this link grabber
WebSite-Watcher	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Limited trial	Check to see if your favourite websites have updated
xSite	98/Me/NT/2000	Free	A Web development tool with some neat plug-ins

Email

Utility name	System	Notes	Description
bt Email Searcher	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Find email addresses on the Web
bt Mail Checker lite	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	A POP3 email checker program for Windows
bt Mass Mailer	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Limited trial	Very fast mass mailer program
bt Subscription Manager	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Extract business email address from your POP3 mailbox
32bit Email Broadcaster	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Limited trial	Send newsletters and other mails
Ability Mail Server	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Limited trial	Access your SMTP, POP3 and Web mail accounts using a secure server
ActiveMail	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Send email messages from an ASP-enabled website
Advanced Email Parser	98/NT/2000	Limited trial	A program that processes incoming email messages
Advanced Emailer	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Limited trial	Send electronic mail utilising mailing lists
Advanced Mailbox Processor	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Extract email addresses from files on your PC
Advanced SMTP Server	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Send emails directly from to a recipient's mailbox
AgentMail	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Let your computer alert you to new emails
Bulk Email Mailer	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Limited trial	Utilise mailing lists with this small email program
CheckP3	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	A great email checker with POP3 and IMAP4 support
DocServer	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	An email tool that retrieves and processes user mail
E_Cloaker	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Encrypt your website's email links
Easy Notification	98/NT	Free	Get notification when you receive new mail
EmC-Email Control	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Minimise the impact of spam on your email use
ePrompter	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Check all your Web-based email accounts simultaneously
EZ Checker	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	A simple tool to check both POP3 and Web mail accounts to see if there are any new messages
Goutlook	XP/2000	Free	Add Gmail style labels and Gmail style "archive it" functionality to Outlook
I.Scribe	98/Me/NT/2000	Free	Space-saving and blissfully simple email client
IMAP Notify	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Check for new mail automatically
Internet Ally Suite	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Protect your inbox from spam and block internet pop-ups
Internet Email Spider	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Limited trial	Extract email addresses with this superb email program
Jet-MailMonitor	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	A System Tray email checking utility for Windows
JW Inbox	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Receive alerts whenever you receive a new message
K9	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Filter out spam so it doesn't clog up your email inbox
Locksparn	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	A safe anti-spam program for Outlook
Mail Alert	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Email notifier that supports Outlook 2000, 2002 and 2003
Mail Box Dispatcher	98/Me/XP/2000	Free	Control incoming mail on the server side
MailBoy 2004	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Limited trial	Send emails to thousands of recipients at once
MailNavigator	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Limited trial	An email and news client

Utility name	System	Notes	Description
Matador Spam Fighter	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Remove spam and junk tiles with this program
MsgSaver	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	14-day trial	Back up Outlook email addresses to a remote location or removable media - see page 94 for more details
NetMail	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	An email client program for Windows
NetMailBot	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Send emails with HTML formatting
nPOP	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Preview your email messages whist still on your server
Pick-a-Tag	98/NT	Free	Randomly pick a subject line from a list of taglines
PocoMail	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	A different approach to an email application
POP Peeper	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	POP Peeper runs in your System Tray and lets you know if you have email
POPFile	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Automatically classify your email messages to filter out spam
PopMan	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	A simple POP3 manager and email checker
Poppy for Windows	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Check for new messages across multiple POP3 accounts
PopTray	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	View, read and send email
Scientific Letter	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Create mail messages using complex equations
Spam Fighter	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Block spam from your POP3 email
SPAMFilter ISP	NT/2000	Limited trial	Powerful server-side spam filter to keep networks clear at unsolicited mail application - see page 95 for more details
Spam Punisher	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	60-day trial	Track down spam senders' details, then send a complaint to their ISP
Spam Weasel	98/Me/NT/2000	Free	Get rid of spam before it arrives in your inbox
Spamilnator	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Eliminate up to 98% of the spam flooding into your inbox
Spamologist	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	A spam filtering program with some cool tweaks
SpamPal	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Check the source of incoming mail
Telemarketing Blocker	98/Me/XP/2000	Free	Stop telemarketing calls with this program
The Quick Mailer	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	A tiny program for sending quick email messages
Vivian Mail	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Check your email on your POP3 server before downloading it and much more
WebMail Alert	98/NT	Free	Keep track of any Web-based email
X-Mailer Direct	XP/2000	Free	Email marketing program
X-Ray	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Filter email based on the headers

Networking

Utility name	System	Notes	Description
BOOTP Desktop	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Boot all your network clients with support for both BOOTP and Static DHCP
CommTraffic	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Collect, process and display traffic and network stats
DiagWin Deployment	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Limited trial	Deploy patches, software updates and hotfixes
EtherDetect Packet Sniffer	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Capture full TCP/IP packets and organise them by TCP
FileSpy NT	NT	Limited trial	See who has files opened and locked under NTFS
Giraffe	XP/NT/2000	Limited trial	Monitor nodes, processes and directories
IP Tools	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Incorporate a suite of TCP/IP Utilities
Ipinterceptor	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Capture and analyse sent and received TCP/UDP packets
IPnote	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	15-day trial	Detect your current IP address and keep this information updated as your IP changes
LANView	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Set up an administrative network
Magic Remote Control Pcspy 2004	98/Me/NT/2000	Limited trial	Control and monitor limitless network PCs in spy mode
NET Clipboard	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Enable the Windows clipboard to be shared over a LAN application - see page 95 for more details
NetSetMan	XP/2000	Free	Set up 5 pre-defined network connections on one system application - see page 95 for more details
NetTime	98/NT	Free	Synchronise your system clock with online time servers
Network Asset Monitor	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Limited trial	Get information about your system components
Network Asset Tracker	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Obtain information about your network systems
Network Inventory Expert	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Limited trial	Get information about hardware, installed software and running processes
Network Inventory Monitor	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Limited trial	Make up, track and analyse your network
NetworkActiv PIAFCTM	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	TCP/IP packet analyser for Windows
PerlNet	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Access the Linux/Unix shell from your Windows desktop
Plug and Browse	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Set up quick access to the internet
Rider	NT/2000	Limited trial	Test your network and measure bandwidth and voice over IP
ServiceMill	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Run any application or program as a NT service
SwitchPro	XP	Free	Switch between network profiles
TCPDB	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Keep track of your TCP/IP addresses and hosts
TCPView	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	View detailed listings of your TCP settings
Ultra Network Sniffer	XP	Limited trial	A network visibility tool for Windows
UserMonitor	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Limited trial	Monitor what other network computers are seeing

Utility name	System	Notes	Description
VisualRoute	98/NT/2000	Limited trial	Trace the route of your IP packet on a map of the world
WinRadius	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	A standard RADIUS server program for Windows
WNetStat	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Limited trial	View network and internet connections for a particular PC
XP Firewall Viewer	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Get quick access to viewing entries in your internet connection

Security and antivirus

Utility name	System	Notes	Description
8WinSpy	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Delete the traces of your internet activity
1 Click & Lock	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Prevent unauthorised access to your PC
1Smart Encryptor	98/Me/NT/2000	Free	State of the art encryption tool for protecting your data
1st Desktop Guard	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Protect, back up and restore your desktop
2 Password	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Convert asterisk-masked letters in password fields
ASP Password Recovery	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Limited trial	Retrieve lost passwords with this handy tool
Access Boss	XP/2000	Limited trial	Restrict the time when a specific group of users is allowed to use a network computer - see page 96 for more details
Access Denied	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Limited trial	Block unauthorised users from accessing your system
Access Lock	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Lock your PC with a password
Access Manager	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	A fast, easy and secure password storage program
Access Manager for Windows	98/Me/NT/2000	Free	Restrict access to key features of Windows
Access Password	98/NT/2000	Limited trial	Recover lost Microsoft Access passwords
Access Password Recovery master	98/Me/NT/2000	Free	Restore lost or forgotten user passwords
ActiveScreenLock	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Prevent others from entering your computer
ActMon Computer and Internet Monitoring	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Limited trial	Monitor your PC's activity, including what sites are accessed on the internet - see page 96 for more details
Ads Alert	98/Me/NT/2000	Free	Remove all advert alerts with this tool
Advanced Anti Keylogger	98/Me/NT/2000	Free	Ensure that no keyloggers are monitoring your Web activity
Advanced Email Monitoring	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Monitor email activities with this program
Advanced File Protector	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Protect your files with strong encryption
Advanced Hide Folders	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	An advanced version of Hide Folders
Advanced Instant Messengers Password Recovery	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Level limited	Recover lost passwords
Advanced PDF Password Recovery	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Limited trial	Recover forgotten passwords on Adobe Acrobat files
AdwareSpy	98/Me/NT/2000	Free	An advanced anti-spyware/adware tool
Agent Password	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Limited trial	Log all of the passwords entered on your system
AKAS Hide Folders	98/Me/NT/2000	Free	Make selected folders invisible to other users on your machine
Akeeper	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Limited trial	Keep your passwords up to date
All-in-One Secretmaker	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Protect your privacy and security with these great tools
A-Lock	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Encrypt your emails to keep them secure
Anti-Keylogger	XP/NT/2000	10 use trial	Prevent people from monitoring you using keyloggers
ArtistScope CD	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Copy protection of content distributed by CD
Ashampoo IP Spam Blocker	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Stop IP spam from entering your machine using the Windows Messaging service - see page 96 for more details
AVG Antivirus 7	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Secure your system against viruses with one of the best free scanners available application - see page 96 for more details
AxCrypt	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	A powerful encryption tool that integrates into Explorer
Blue Tango	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Scramble selected text so that it cannot be read until the correct password is - see page 96 for more details
CD-Lock	XP/2000	Limited trial	Secure data contained on portable media
CHAOS Chameleon	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Limited trial	Encrypt the files and folders to hide in .jpg, .gif and .doc files
Clear Space	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Limited trial	Cover up or clean up any information on your PC
Cookie Jar	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Control your internet cookies and allow only the ones you really need
Cookie Monster	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Scan your cookies and delete those you don't want
Deksaft Private Disk Lite	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Store data on a virtual encrypted disk that appears in your system like a normal drive
encrystopop	XP/2000	Free	Encrypt files and folders by dragging and dropping them onto this program
JAP	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Surf the Internet anonymously with this tool that hides your IP address online - see page 96 for more details
KL-Detector	XP/2000	Free	Detect if your activity is being recorded by a keylogger
MultiPrivacy	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Protect your privacy online by using anonymous proxy servers
Netscapass	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Reveal the stored dial-up password for Netscape, as well as stored website passwords
ProWatcher	98/XP	Free	Stop any unsafe processes straight away with the aid of this system watcher
SpywareBuster	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Stop spyware getting on to your machine instead of removing it later
StartPage Guard	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Prevent programs or websites from hijacking your browser home (startup) page

Utility name	System	Notes	Description
Zipeg	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Convert more than 50 graphics file formats into .jpg images
2Pic	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Open two pictures and mix them together
A Square Image	98/NT	Free	Scale, resize, crop and edit your image files
A1 Picture Resize	98/XP/2000	Limited trial	Resize your digital photographs for viewing in an album
ABC Amber Image Converter	98/Me/NT/2000	Free	Convert graphics files between various different formats
AKVS Stamp	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	10-day trial	Enhance your photographs with this plug-in equivalent of the Photoshop Healing brush
AlgoLab Photo Vector	98/NT/2000	Limited trial	Convert colour raster images to vector formats
APFill	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Calculate how many sheets your printer can print
Artext Personal Edition	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	15-use trial	Convert digital photos into coloured text using your own choice of text - see page 97 for more details
ASCIIart	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Convert your picture files into colour ASCII character text images - see page 97 for more details
ASPThumb	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Enable ASP applications to create thumbnail images
Avicons Lite	98/Me/NT/2000	Free	Create impressive icons for use with any programs or CDs - see page 97 for more details
BMP	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Small and simple batch processor for image files, that enables you to perform various functions
Brush Strokes Image Editor	98/Me/NT/2000	Free	A free image editor program for Windows, which featured dozens of effects - see page 97 for more details
Button Blast	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Limited trial	300 textured buttons for use on the Web
Cheez	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Powerful image cataloguing software that creates thumbnails of your images
Colour Editor	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Introduce a colour from one .bmp into another
CoolCap	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Limited trial	NDI picture viewer and screenshot program
CopyHook	98/NT/2000	Limited trial	Edit your photos so they look just the way you want
Cku	98/Me/NT	Free	Visio clone which can help you create diagrams and flowcharts
Gfatics	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Windows Explorer add-on allowing you to quickly view and resize many different graphics formats
GLSViewer	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Fast 3D mesh viewer program
Grafs2	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Nifty and fuss-free freeware image editor based on a popular Amiga program
Icon2Text	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Change an icon into ASCII text art
IcoToJPeg	98/NT	Free	Convert .ico files to .jpg or .bmp images
Image Comparer	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	30-day trial	Quickly locate duplicate images on your hard drive - see page 97 for more details
Image Resizer	98/NT	Limited trial	Resize your .jpg images en masse
ImageN	98/NT	Free	Acquire, copy and edit pictures and create .avi movies from still images
JavaScript Animator Express	98/Me/XP/2000	Free	Create a JavaScript animation from a selection of image files
Liquidicon XP	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Freeware icon editor suite for Windows
Merge	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	A simple graphic utility for Windows
MezzoForce	98/XP/NT/2000	Free	Create ice and water effects with this Photoshop plug-in
MMD ColorPicker	98/Me/2000	Limited trial	Identify the colour value of any pixel on-screen
My Photo Album	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Catalogue .bmps and .jpgs
nips	XP/2000	Free	Preview and modify images with this fast image viewer
OneNit Texture Converter	98/XP/2000	Free	Convert .jpg images into .png format
P3pO Explorer	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Browse your graphics collection with an Explorer-style interface
Photo Resizer Pro	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Limited trial	Utility to resize and email photos
PhotoFiltre	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Apply many different effects and filters to your photos with this excellent program
PhotoLookAlike	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Limited trial	Make any photo take on the colour of another
PhotoView	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	An easy and compact photo viewer for Windows
PicMaker	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Limited trial	A viewer made to browse pictures
Pixia	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Create impressive images using layers, masks and brushes
Pixie	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Point to any on-screen colour to find out its Hex, RGB, CMYK, and HSV values
pixize	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Limited trial	Resize, rotate and compress pictures
QV	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	A budget-friendly alternative to the big name image editors
Red Eye Remover	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	30-day trial	A simple image-editing tool for removing red eye
SlickView	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Quick and slick image viewer
sTile	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Create seamless tiles
Texelex	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Create gradient effect text for use in websites or GTP projects
Texture cutter	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Utility that lets you cut a portion of an image and tile it
TiffTags	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Read all tags within a header
X2Y	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Limited trial	An Open Source image converter for Windows

Audio and video

Utility name	System	Notes	Description
1337player	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	A small video player that fully utilises DirectX 9 - see page 98 for more details
abcAVI Tag Editor	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	View and edit the tags associated with your .avi files
Ace OivX Player	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Small OivX video player that supports a wide range of files
Apollo OVO Copy	98/Me/NT/2000	Limited trial	Copy DVD movies to blank OVO discs
AudioMagician CD Ripper	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Limited trial	Grab audio CD tracks directly into .mp3s or .wavs - see page 98 for more details
AVI Joiner	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Limited trial	An easy-to-use tool to join multiple .avi files
AVI Splitter	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Limited trial	Extract segments from .avi movies
Avi2Bmp	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Convert an uncompressed .avi into one large .bmp file which tiles the frames
Cool OVO Ripper	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Limited trial	Easy-to-use DVD ripping program for Windows
Destiny Media Player	98/NT/2000	Free	An .mp3 player with drag-and-drop capabilities
DivXLand Subtitler	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Manually add subtitles to movies and videos on the fly - see page 98 for more details
DVD Rebuilder	98/Me/XP/2000	Free	Encode and re-encode DVD movies to create complete backups
Easy Audio/Data CD/DVD Burner	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Limited trial	Burn audio CDs, DVD videos and disc-based backups using this simple disc authoring tool - see page 98 for more details
Free Audio Recorder	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Record any sound you can hear on your computer, including Internet radio streams
Gr8_Player	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	A simple and powerful media player
ICU Messenger	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Have real-time audio and video conversations with this tool
iPhotoDVD	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Limited trial	Create DVD/SVCD compatible MPEG videos from digital photos
JJ MP3 Renamer	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Easily give your .mp3 files correct names
Lalim Compact Player	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	A standalone video player for Windows
Lalim DVD Player	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Limited trial	A small software DVD player
LaPlaya	98/NT/2000	Free	List all the movies in a directory and play one clip after another
MCI-Browser	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Play, copy or move audio and video files without unnecessary mouse clicks
MoreTunes	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Limited trial	Read about songs being played by Windows Media Player
MP3 Cataloguer	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Store all the information about your .mp3 compilations
MP3 Gain	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Normalise the volume levels of your .mp3 files
MP3OB	98/Me/NT/2000	Free	Make sure you know what's playing on your PC with this tool
Mp3Extractor	98/Me/NT/2000	Free	Combine sections from different .mp3s into a new .mp3 file
MP3FE	98/NT/2000	Free	Get a graphical front-end for .mp3 albums stored on CD-ROMs - see page 98 for more details
mp3Tag	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Multi-functional viewer and editor
MPEG Scissors	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Easily edit .mpeg files
ms3tagger	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Edit and rename the ID3 tags that accompany .mp3 audio files
Music Express	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Limited trial	Quickly create a catalog of your music files, grouped by album, artist, year or any other criteria
PyroDVD	98/Me/2000	Limited trial	A streamlined DVD player for playing your disc-based movies - see page 98 for more details
RC4WA	98/Me/NT/2000	Free	Control Nullsoft Winamp with help of your remote control
SHOUTcast Server ONAS	98/Me	Free	Broadcast an Internet radio station using streaming audio
Smart Video Converter	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Limited trial	Convert, join and split video
Smart WAV Converter	98/Me/NT/2000	Limited trial	Reduce the size of audio files
Sonar	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Make sure your short stories never gather dust with this submission tracking tool
StationPlaylist Creator 2.0a	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Limited trial	Music scheduler for Windows
Taginator	98/NT/2000	Free	Batch-write .mp3 tags with this utility
TellMeAboutOivx	98/NT/2000	Free	Shows you information about OivX
UTagIt	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Edit your .mp3 files' tag information
VID4WA	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Play video clips via Winamp using this plug-in
Vidzi Player	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Listen to streaming radio stations
VirtualDub	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Capture video sequences and then edit them
Xenorate	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	A skinnable multimedia player for DVDs and music
Zoe Projector	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Audio/video player for Windows

Games and leisure

Utility name	System	Notes	Description
climamestro	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Help keep your ROM collection up-to-date with this handy management tool
Downfall by Peter	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Channel falling snow into a hole at the bottom of the screen in this fast-paced two player retro classic
Earthbound Summer Vacation	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	A small platform game with some cool features and a fun story - see page 99 for more details
LEGO Digital Designer	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Build anything in your imagination using virtual LEGO bricks
Ninjin	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Battle as a ninja with this small platform game
Nochs IV	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Fly around and explore a strange world
Package	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	A falling blocks type puzzle game for your PC
Sheep Boy 2	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Navigate sheep through 20 levels of forests, vegetables and rivers in this fun puzzle game
Snoopy's Super Escape	98/Me/XP	Free	Guide Snoopy safely to his kennel in this parachute challenge - see page 99 for more details
Super Secret Ninja	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Work your way stealthily past the enemies in this ninja-inspired platform game - see page 99 for more details

Programming

Utility name	System	Notes	Description
BlueDream	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	A visual programming language in Delphi7 with 3D design
CodeThatMenu Standard	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Create JavaScript navigation menus for use on your website
CodeThatPacker	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Limited trial	A JavaScript compression tool for Windows
Codex	98/NT	Limited trial	Export source code for publication in HTML, RTF or TeX format
cpCookieLib	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Capture code to store in this multiple-language library
Internet Component Suite	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Program Internet applications with Borland Delphi
MoreMotion XML Editor	98/XP/NT/2000	Free	Edit and verify XML files used in MoreMotion projects
MyNotes	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Create MySQL clients in C and C++
Nova Engine	98/Me/NT/2000	Free	Create games with this set of C++ classes
SonEnc	98/Me/NT/2000	Limited trial	Encrypt and decrypt JavaScript
Tiler Studio	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	A graphics development utility for game programmers
Visual Merge	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Limited trial	Display files visually to compare and merge easily
VssConnect	98/Me/NT/2000	Limited trial	Gain access to sourcesafe databases quickly
WmIO	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Retrieve important information about your Windows system

Misc

Utility name	System	Notes	Description
.mobile	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Manage your mobile phone's sim card and your PC's Outlook contacts - see page 99 for more details
Advanced Gamma Corrector	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Limited trial	Calibrate a monitor with this tool
Alarm	98/Me/NT/2000	Free	A digital clock that you can set to display messages
Analogtime Lite	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	View three analog clocks for multiple time displays
CD Tray Pal	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	System Tray based CD-drive control menu
Clock Guard	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Prevent users from tampering with the Windows clock
Free Notes	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Add colourful notes and reminders to your desktop - see page 99 for more details
LabelBarcPro	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Limited trial	Print out barcodes and labels
Ltrack	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Track one or more football leagues - produces statistics for teams, players, goals, penalties, and so on.
ModemTest	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Limited trial	Test your dial-up modem with this Windows-based program
SwizzTool	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	An easy-to-use alarm clock/reminder program for Windows
Tvwscurs	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	A Windows utility to automatically move the mouse cursor
Textyper	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Send individual or bulk text messages to contacts
WatchAvanti XP	XP	Free	Resume download utility for Forte Agent v1.8
WeatherCheck	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Bring the latest local weather to your desktop
WinMacro	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Limited trial	Create macros to automate common tasks and run them with this program - see page 99 for more details

Information managers

Utility name	System	Notes	Description
ABiX	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	30-day trial	Store addresses and manage your time
Active Desktop Calendar	98/Me/XP/NT/2000 +	Limited trial	Access a fully customisable calendar, contacts manager and notes tool from your desktop
Address Book Standard	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Keep a through catalogue of your contacts
Awake Reminder	98/Me/XP/2000	Limited trial	Create calendars and event reminders for important occasions
Cute Reminder	98/Me/XP/2000	30-day trial	Create desktop notes, reminders and manage your schedule
KindOiary	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Limited trial	An attractive diary tool for keeping track of your schedule
MiniReminder	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	A small program to remind yourself of important yearly events
Personal Address File	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Limited trial	Store people's contact information in one central database
Scribble-It	XP	Free	Keep important information on your desktop as Post-It notes
Smart Diary	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Get your life sorted out!
Smart Diary Suite	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	15-entry trial	Keep track of your daily events in an old-style journal, including reminders, contacts and graphs

Utility name	System	Notes	Description
Task Plus	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Manage your schedule and calendar graphically
TaskPrompt	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Ensure you complete your daily tasks on time
Web Cal Plus	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Limited trial	Generate HTML-based calendars to display your schedule
WinOrganizer	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	30-day trial	Get control of your life and information
XenICo Address Book	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Manage all of the information related to your contacts

The Complete Internet Protection Toolkit [CD2]

Antivirus tools

Utility name	System	Notes	Description
a2 Free	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Scan your computer for malicious software and remove any offending code/files
AntiVir Personal Edition	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Latest version of this popular antivirus software
Avast! Home Edition	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Terrific free virus scanner for home users
BitDefender for ICQ	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Stop viruses being transferred as attachments via ICQ
BitDefender Standard 8	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	30-day trial	Fully functional trial of the powerful antivirus application from BitDefender
BullGuard	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	20-day trial	Fully functional trial of this secure internet security suite
ClamWin Antivirus	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	An antivirus toolkit for Windows
Fp-Check	98/NT/2000	Free	Utility for the virus scanner F-Prot
F-Prot Antivirus	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	30-day trial	Protect all your information against the threat of viruses
F-Secure Anti-Virus	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	30-day trial	Very dependable and accurate antivirus suite
Panda Titanium Antivirus 2005	98/Me/NT/XP/2000	30-day trial	Protect your PC against viruses, worms and Trojans
Principal AntiVirus	XP/2000	21-day trial	Protect your PC against viruses code
ProcessGuard	XP/2000	Free	Protect Windows from root-kit Trojans
Sleipnirs Antivirus	98/Me/NT/XP/2000	Limited trial	Get protection against viruses
SlopiTrow	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Stop dialler programs completely with this program
SwenDeleter	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Identify email messages infected with the Swen.A worm
Trojan Remover	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	30 day trial	Remove all known Trojan horse programs
VCatch Antivirus	98/Me/NT/XP/2000	Limited trial	Check all incoming files and email messages
Webroot Beagle Remover	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Remove the Beagle virus from an infected system

Personal firewalls

Utility name	System	Notes	Description
AlertWall Personal Firewall Spyware Blocker	98/Me/NT/XP/2000	Limited trial	Protect your computer from hackers, spyware and viruses
Anti-Hacker& Trojan Expert	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Limited trial	Scan your system for Trojans and hacker activity and set up a firewall to block further incursions
ArmorZnet Personal Firewall	98/Me/NT/XP/2000	Limited trial	Protect your PC form internet-borne threats
ArmorWall Personal Firewall	98/Me/XP/2000	Limited trial	Detect and remove spyware, block and pop-ups with this firewall protection
Enigma Firewall	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Protect your computer from unauthorised invasion
Filseclab Personal Firewall	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Filter our intrusion attempts by hackers and Trojans and view Net traffic visually
Firewall Xtreme	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Limited trial	Monitor your Internet access with this firewall
GoldTach	XP/2000	Free	Compact personal firewall program - includes email protection
Jetico Personal Firewall	98/Me/NT/XP/2000	Free	Protect your system from hackers and unauthorised Net activity
Look 'n' Stop Lite	98/Me/NT/2000	Free	Reliable firewall utility which can be configured using rules
Mac Makeup	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Spoof your system's MAC address at will
Omniquad Personal Firewall	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Control which programs on your PC are allowed to access the internet, define trusted IP addresses and block others
SafeZone - Minute Personal Firewall	98/Me/NT/XP/2000	Free	Protect your PC from hackers and unauthorised users
SoftPerfect Personal Firewall	98/Me/NT/XP/2000	Free	Protect your PC against attacks from the internet or Local Area Network
Sygate Personal Firewall	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Personal firewall that works with LANs as well as the internet
Tiny Personal Firewall	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Protect your personal computer against hackers with this free-ware firewall
TZ Personal Firewall	98/Me/NT/XP/2000	Limited trial	Keep your PC safe from hackers and Trojans
WyvernWorks Firewall	98/Me/NT/XP/2000	Free	Detect and prevent intrusion from outside as well as from internal attacks
ZoneAlarm	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Protect your PC with this award-winning firewall application

Spyware blockers

Utility name	System	Notes	Description
Adware Away	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Limited trial	Detect unwanted adware components that may be lurking on your hard drive
Bazooka Adware and Spyware Scanner	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Remove spyware and adware from your system
GIANT AntiSpyware	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	15-day trial	Use a secure link to browse and stop spyware
IE Spyad	98/Me/NT/XP/2000	Free	Install the original IE Spyad program for your PC
NoSpyX	98/Me/NT/XP/2000	Free	Block your spyware with this tool for Windows
Process Patrol	98/Me/NT/XP/2000	Free	Stop spyware, adware and other unwanted processes
ScanSpyware	98/Me/NT/XP/2000	Free	100% protection against spyware with this program
SpyBlocker	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Limited trial	Stop spyware from transmitting details about you and your browsing habits
SpyCleaner	98/Me/NT/XP/2000	Free	Check your computer for spyware and remove it
Spyware Blaster	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Put a stop to spyware applications before they get onto your PC
Spyware Doctor	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Limited trial	Detect and remove spyware from your system - live update feature does not work in trial version
Spyware Guard	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Monitor your system for invading spyware
Spyware Slayer	98/Me/NT/XP/2000	Free	Slay unwanted spyware with this program for Windows
Spyware Snooper	98/Me/NT/XP/2000	Free	Protect your PC from various types of spyware
System Spyware Interrogator	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Provide your computer with real-time protection against spyware, including malware components yet to be identified
Webroot Spy Sweeper	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Limited trial	Safely detect and remove Trojans, keyloggers and spyware
X-Cleaner Free	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Detect and remove spyware, protect your browser homepage from hijackers and more
Zero Spyware	98/Me/NT/XP/2000	Free	Identify and remove browser hijackers, adware and spyware

Spyware removal

Utility name	System	Notes	Description
Ad-Aware SE Personal Edition	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Root out spyware and adware components on your system and eliminate them
Ad-Aware VX2 Cleaner	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Detect and remove VX2 spyware that Ad-Aware sometimes struggles to eradicate
AdKiller	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Limited trial	Protect your computer from adware
Adware Agent	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Limited trial	Prevent adware and spyware programs
Adware Spy	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Limited trial	Protect your computer from adware, spyware and keyloggers
AdwareX Eliminator	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	An adware and spyware remover
B3D Killer	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Get rid of annoying adware problems with this tool
ETD Security Scanner	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Scan your PC and eliminate spyware, adware and Trojans
JC Spyware and Adware Remover	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Remove adware and spyware problems with this tool
KazaaBegone	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Scan and remove all elements of Kazaa from your system
Previx Home	XP/2000	Free	Protect Windows against new internet worms and hacks
RegFreeze	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Scan for spyware and clean it from your PC
Spy Cleaner Gold	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Eliminate adware and spyware nestled in your system
Spy-Ad Exterminator	98/Me/NT/2000	Free	Eliminate any spyware components resident on your system
Spybot Search and Destroy	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Get rid of spyware, which may be causing system crashes
SpyHunter	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Limited trial	Detect and remove adware
Tenik SE plugin for Lavasoft Ad-Aware SE	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Provide multiple additional configuration options for Ad-Aware SE

Anti-spam tools

Utility name	System	Notes	Description
(STEVEN)	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Limited trial	An advanced email checking system that validates the sender of the message
Antispam Scanner	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Limited trial	New anti-spam solution
CT13-POP3	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Email server that stops spam and malware
Clean Box	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Limited trial	Prevent spam messages and adverts with this program
Cove Antispam	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Protect Microsoft Outlook 2000/2002/2003 against spam
Ella for Spam	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Limited trial	Filter spam out of your emails
Email Remover	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Delete emails from your server before downloading them
InboxIRO	98/Me/NT/XP/2000	Limited trial	Keep your inbox free from spam
KillSpam	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Limited trial	Kill spam with this program for your PC
Lockspam for Outlook	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Limited trial	Block spam for Outlook
Mailbox Guard	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Limited trial	Fight spam, junk mail and viruses
MailFrontier Desktop	98/Me/XP/2000	30-day trial	Keep phishing emails out of your inbox with this anti-fraud tool. Requires Outlook or Outlook Express
MailMate Anti-Spam Expert	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Limited trial	Powerful anti-spam software
MailWasher	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Limited trial	Spam detection and mail preview program
Spam Monitor	98/Me/XP/2000	30-day trial	An easy-to-use spam filter for Windows
Spam Sleuth	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Limited trial	Eliminate spam and potential virus emails
SPAMfighter	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Give your email client spam-filtering capabilities
SpamSource	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Outlook spam reporting tool for Windows
Zaep AntiSpam	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	30-day trial	Eliminate spam using a challenge-based response system
ZAPaSPAM for Outlook	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Filter spam from your mail boxes with this tool

Browser protection

Utility name	System	Notes	Description
ADS Spy	98/Me/XP/2000	Free	View or delete Alternate Data Streams that some spyware uses to hijack your webpage

Utility name	System	Notes	Description
AntiTracer	98/Me/XP/NT	Limited trial	Pop-up destroying program for Windows
Bangopup	98/Me/XP/2000	Free	Eliminate the annoyance of pop-up advertising
Browser Hijack Recover	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	15-day trial	Get your browser back to normal after spyware or adware hijacks your homepage - also removes BHOs
Browser Sentinel	98/Me/XP/2000	30-day trial	Keep track of all the external programs that plug into Internet Explorer and block browser hijackers
CoolWebShredder	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Remove coolweb search programs from your browser
Coolwww.smart.killer.remover	98/Me/NT/XP/2000	Free	Don't let your browser get hijacked with this tool
Free History Eraser	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Erase the Internet history on your PC
GoGoData AdBuster	98/NT/2000	Free	Block all forms of pop-ups, video ads and suchlike
Google Toolbar	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Add a Google search bar to Internet Explorer - includes a pop-up ad blocker
HijackThis	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Remove any browser homepage hijackers from your system
HJThotkey	98/Me/NT/XP/2000	Free	Some handy shortcuts will keep your browsing safe
IE Hijack Remover	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	5-use trial	Reset your Internet Explorer settings to eradicate malicious browser hijackers
IE Webmaster Toolkit Pop Blocker	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Block pop-up advertising and perform whois and IP/host lookup operations
IRejecTrash	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Block pop-ups, cookies, referrers, banner adverts and more
KillZMe	98/Me	Free	Remove all traces of the LookZMe spyware component from your system
KillAd	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Close pop-up adverts as they appear
Pop Cop	98/Me/NT/2000	Limited trial	Block pop-ups and floating ads from attacking your PC
Pop Up Blocker	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Limited trial	Get rid of pop-up windows and prevent sites from changing your browser homepage
Pop Up Blocker Pro	98/Me/NT/2000	Limited trial	Block spam and pop-ups and erase files
Pop Up Stopper and Ad Killer for Kazaa	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Detect pop-ups and remove them
Popkil Popup Closer	98/Me	Free	Keep Internet pop-up Windows on a tight leash
PopOops	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	A small program that blocks all pop-up windows
Popup Chomper	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Detect and block internal pop-ups
PopUp Jammer	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Block unsolicited pop-ups and find out which sites are blocked
Popup Killer 3000	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Limited trial	Block pop-ups and pop-unders with this program
Popup Stopper	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Stop Internet Explorer and Netscape pop-ups
PopUp Xterminator	98/Me/NT/XP/2000	Free	Protect yourself from annoying pop-ups
Pop-Up Zero	98/Me/NT/2000	Free	Simple and effective pop-up blocker
Proxomitron	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Turn off some of the fancy HTML options and go back to basics
TrueBlock	98/Me/XP/2000	Free	Remove those annoying pop-up windows with this program
VSPopUp	98/Me/NT/XP/2000	Free	Stop pop-ups and kill ActiveX dialogs
Web Tunnel	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Surf and chat anonymously and block adverts
WinSettings	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Limited trial	Change the appearance of your Windows desktop

Cookie management

Utility name	System	Notes	Description
AnalogX CookieWall	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Decide which cookies you want to keep and which to block
Cookie Monitor	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	View and manipulate cookies
Cookie Muncher	98/Me/NT/2000	Free	Kill cookies the moment they're set on your system
Cookie Remover Platinum	98/Me/NT/XP/2000	Limited trial	Free up disk space and avoid possible threats
Cookie Selector	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Take full control of cookie activity on your system
Cookies Manager	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Manage the Internet cookies stored on your system
Cooxe Toolbar for IE	98/Me/XP/2000	Free	Control and delete cookies and Internet cache files
Free History Cleaner	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Maintain your privacy by deleting cookies
IECookiesView	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Display information on all the cookies Internet Explorer stores
Kamens Cookie Viewer	98/Me/NT/XP/2000	Free	Discover the information websites store on your computer
Kil-Washer	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Erase your Internet cookies, Web cache, Recycle Bin, autocomplete entries and more
LockJar	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Take control of your Internet Explorer cookies and decide which you want to keep
Power Eraser Demo	98/Me/NT/XP/2000	Limited trial	Erase the cookies and delete all temporary files
Privacy Mantra	98/Me/NT/XP/2000	Limited trial	Erase and wash away most privacy threats
PurgelE	98/NT/2000	Limited trial	Clean out your Internet Explorer cache to free space
SpyStopper	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Limited trial	Block intrusive spyware, worms, cookies and more
SuperCool Window Washer	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Limited trial	Clean up your tracks on the Internet
Tracks Eraser Pro	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Limited trial	Remove all traces of your PC usage
Windows Cleaner	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Limited trial	Clean up your computer and remove history files

Online privacy

Utility name	System	Notes	Description
Advanced Internet Eraser	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Limited trial	Clean up the tracks of your Internet browsing activity
Anti Tracks	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Limited trial	Erase your Internet tracks and computer activity

Utility name	System	Notes	Description
Broadband Lock Internet Security	98/Me/NT/XP/2000	Limited trial	A small security suite for Windows
CoffeCup Privacy Cleaner	98/Me/NT/XP/2000	Free	Stop websites from tracking your every internet move
Complete Internet Cleanup Pro	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Limited trial	Erase all traces of your internet browsing activity
C-Privacy	98/Me/NT/XP/2000	Limited trial	Erase tracks of your PC Activities and block pop-ups
E-Bouncer	98/Me/XP/2000	Limited trial	Hide your IP and surf the Web
Evidence Destructor	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Remove information your PC collects about your usage history
FlashClean	98/Me/NT/XP/2000	Limited trial	Clean up the history of your activities
Free Internet Eraser	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Clear up your history and browser trails
HistorySweep	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Limited trial	Remove Web browsing history trials
IE Internet Security	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Customise different settings
Ieasy Cleaner	98/Me/XP/2000	Free	Erase traces of your online activity including browser cookies, Internet history and temporary files.
MyPrivacy	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Clean up all traces of Internet and PC usage
PcSuper Scanner	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Scan communication ports on your computer
Privacy Defender	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Limited trial	Clean up your Internet history
Privacy Eraser Pro	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Limited trial	Securely protect your privacy on your PC
Privacy Guardian	98/Me/NT/XP/2000	Limited trial	Permanently delete traces of your Internet activities
PrivacyView	98/Me/NT/XP/2000	Free	Encrypt downloaded files and web surfing traces
Smart Protector pro	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Limited trial	Erase your Internet history
Web Tracks Finder	98/Me/NT/XP/2000	Free	Scan files on your computers hard drive with this tool

Parental filters

Utility name	System	Notes	Description
Access Control	98/Me/NT/XP/2000	Limited trial	Control the days and times when your children use the PC
Aye Parental Control	98/Me/NT/XP/2000	Limited trial	Monitor/limit your children's PC use and filter online activity
BadSubject	XP	Limited trial	Protect your family from harmful websites
Child Control 2004	98/Me/NT/XP/2000	Free	Control PC usage time and access to websites
CyberPatrol	98/Me/NT/XP/2000	Limited trial	Manage your children's Net usage and protect them on the Web
CYBERsitter	98/Me/NT/2000	10-day trial	Protect your children with this powerful Net filtering and access control software
ENUFF	98/Me	Limited trial	Control the amount of time your kids use the Internet
Nanny 2003	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Limited trial	Blocks explicit webpages and limit access to files and folders on your system
Net nanny	98/Me/NT/XP/2000	Limited trial	Control your children's access to websites
Parental Filter	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Block your children from entering harmful explicit websites
PureSight PC	98/Me/NT/XP/2000	Limited trial	Protect your kids by filtering bad web sites
Razzul	XP	Limited trial	Provide a safe internet experience for your children
Safe Eyes	98/Me/NT/2000	15-day trial	Filter out harmful websites with this tool
SurfingShield	98/Me/NT/XP/2000	Limited trial	Protect your computer from online attacks
System Surveillance Pro	98/Me/NT/XP/2000	Limited trial	Monitor and control your children's online activity
Toddlers Browser	98/Me/NT/2000	Free	A free wrapper for Microsoft Internet Explorer
WatchDog	XP	Free	A small program to monitor the status of Windows Service Pack 2 firewall
Web Cop	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Limited trial	Log all websites visited
WebScout Filter	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Limited trial	Monitor and restrict internet access

Miscellaneous

Utility name	System	Notes	Description
Abtrusion Protector	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Limited trial	Prevent Windows from installing/running unrecognised software
Ad-Aware SE HexDump	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Find out the URL of the originator of spyware cookies detected in Ad-Aware SE
Advanced Process Termination	98/Me/NT/XP/2000	Free	Terminate processes with this program
BugOff	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Disable three Internet Explorer exploits commonly used by browser hijackers
DCOMbobulator	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Check your systems DCOM vulnerability
OSO Stop	98/Me/NT/XP/2000	Free	Check the browser for the presence of the Data source object
HTA Stop 2003	98/Me/NT/XP/2000	Free	Shut down Msoft's hypertext application
HTTP-Tunnel	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Go around firewalls with this program
KillBox	98/Me/NT/XP/2000	Free	Install KillBox and remove possible security problems
LSP Explorer for Ad-Aware SE	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	View details on Layered Service Providers (LSPs) on your system that may be redirecting your outbound Web traffic
MoveOnBoot	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Copy, move or delete files during the next Windows boot
MRU-Blaster	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Delete your recent documents lists to keep things private
Owik Fix Pro	XP/NT/2000	Limited trial	Protect Windows against all attacks
Registrar Lite	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Edit the Windows registry using an Explorer-style interface
RegistryProt	98/Me/NT/2000	Free	Monitor and protect your Windows registry
SockLock	98/Me/NT/XP/2000	Free	Don't fall victim to the Hoppy99 virus
Winsock 2.2.2	98/NT/2000	Free	An upgrade to Microsoft's original Winsock

Utility name	System	Notes	Description
Winsock Fix	98/Me/NT/XP/2000	Free	If you have invalid registry entries this can cure the problem
WinExtraCachedPasswords Lock Patch	98/Me/NT/XP/2000	Free	Overcome a security problem with this tool
WSH Anti-Polymorphism Patch	98/Me/NT/XP/2000	Free	Prevent Windows scripts with this tool
XP AntiSpy	98/Me/NT/XP/2000	Free	Disable some features in windows XP

MP3 tools

Utility name	System	Notes	Description
AbilityMP3	98/Me/XP/2000	Free	An .mp3 player with optional recognition ability
Acoustica MP3 Audio Mixer	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Limited trial	Create DJ-style mix CDs and broadcast sets via the Web
Audacity	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Create, edit and mix sounds with this fine free program
Audiograbber	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Record music digitally from your CD-ROM drive
AV MP3 Player - Morpher	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Morph together .mp3s and create neat effects with them - includes a CD ripper, burner and cover creator
CD to MP3 Freeware	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Extract audio CD tracks to .wav or .mp3
Duplicates Killer	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Scan your .mp3 and .wav collection for duplicate files cluttering up your hard drive
Easy CD-DA Extractor	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	30-day trial	Rip CD tracks into .mp3 format (including from damaged discs) and convert between audio formats
Fast MIS	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Fast .mp3 integration system
GSpot	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Get information about installed and required codecs
MTagEditor	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Another .mp3 ID3v2 tag editor
rSound MP3 Recorder	98/Me/NT/XP/2000	Free	Turn your PC into a sound recording studio with this tool
iTunes	XP/2000	Free	Listen to your audio collection, rip tracks from CD and burn compilations
Kraftwerk DJ Software	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Produce impressive mixes with this powerful DJ-orientated media player
MA3D	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Locate and download album cover artwork
MakeItOne MP3 Album Maker	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Join a selection of .mp3 files together into a single album file - files can even be split again later
Media Tagger	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Edit audio files text tags

Utility name	System	Notes	Description
Mega MP3 Splitter	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Audio editor for splitting your .mp3 tracks
MoodAmp	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Select what songs to play according to your mood - works with Media Player and Winamp
MP3 Butcher	98/Me/XP/NT	30-day trial	Cut plant .mp3s down to size with this audio editing tool
MP3 Folders	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Use music folders as playlists
MP3 Librarian	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Catalogue and listen to .mp3s with this small tool
MP3 Tunes	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Play audio files and mix them together with this dual .mp3 player
MP3 Workshop XP	98/NT/2000	Free	Encode, decode and resample your .mp3 files
mp3DirectCut	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Edit .mp3 files without decompressing them first
MP3Gain	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Analyse your audio files and adjust their volume to normalise peaks and troughs for smoother playback
Outlook Mp3 Player	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Play .mp3s in Outlook Express
PlaylistNation	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Share the contents of your music playlist with your friends and family so they can see what you're listening to
Pulse Master	98/Me/NT/XP/2000	Limited trial	Control your music, speed and pitch independently in real time
Quintessential Player	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	An audio player which supports SHOUTcast streams as well as .mp3 .mp4 audio tracks
Radiator	98/Me/NT/2000	Free	Listen to audio from radiocards and record the output
Repacer	98/Me/XP/2000	Limited trial	Convert CD, .mp3 and .wav files to fit your workout pace
Right-Click MP3	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Right-click on any .wav file in Explorer and convert it to .mp3
Sitex MP3-Finder	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Search your computer for .mp3 files
Sonicart	98/Me/NT/XP/2000	Free	A small jingle encoding, scheduling and playback
StationRipper	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Save tracks from internet radio stations as individual .mp3s
Switch Sound Format Converter	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Convert audio files from different formats into .mp3s or .wavs
Synapse Media Player	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Play your media files with this intelligent program that learns what you like to listen to and when
The GodFather	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	Get your digital audio collection in order by editing the tags of .mp3, .ogg, .mpc and .ape files
Winamp 5	98/Me/XP/NT/2000	Free	The newest addition to Nullsoft's Winamp, featuring a smart new look and many new features

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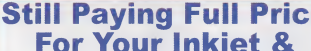

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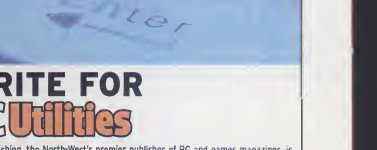

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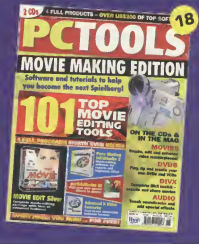

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If you've got something to say about PC Utilities or the world of computing, then we want to hear about it. Here's what you've had to say this month...

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Safe as Opera houses

I would like to thank you for a truly useful publication, but I do have one question. Can you please include Internet security software that functions properly with Opera on the coverdisc? Steganos Internet Anonym, from issue 54, is a superb program that works very well with Firefox but stops Opera dead in its tracks. I like the newest version of Opera and would dearly love some security programs that would enhance the best browser I've ever come across. Many thanks.

Paul R Ambeau

We agree that the new version of Opera is indeed a very good browser, and it possesses some great features. However, Opera's user base is still tiny in comparison to that of Internet Explorer, and this in turn means that program developers supports Microsoft's platform in their products. Because of this, we really have to focus on these browsers, at least until more people plump for Opera.

But, we're not ones to let anyone go away empty handed. If you visit **www.surfsecret.com** you'll find a program called SurfSecret Privacy Protector. This is a similar Internet security and privacy program that supports most browsers, including Opera. Sadly, it's not free, but there is a downloadable trial version, so you'll be able to give it a go and see if you like it.

Although it's not in the major leagues yet, there are still plenty of programs compatible with Opera to be found

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Time to dual?

I've been into DVD authoring for a long time now, and as I'm a keen photographer and home video maker I get a lot of use out of the DVD burners installed in my PC. But, I've recently been reading about the new dual-layer DVD burners that are coming out that support the new 8.5GB discs. This sounds like a great investment, but as the drives, and more importantly, the discs are so expensive, I was wondering if it's really worth it? Or should I stick with my existing models?

Kelly Reynolds

That's a difficult question to answer, as the usefulness of

STAR LETTER

Steamed up

I know this may not be strictly up your alley, but I was wondering if you had any thoughts on letters from readers regarding Valve Software's Steam service.

I pre-ordered Half-Life 2 a long time before release, as I've been waiting over five years for the sequel and am a massive fan of the original. So imagine my surprise when I finally got the copy through the post and eagerly installed it only to find that not only can I not play the game without first activating it online, but also that the Steam server (through which the activation is handled) was so bogged down with activation requests that it simply died under the strain. This meant that I have to wait until later the next day to play a game I physically had in my hands and had paid £40 for. To add insult to injury, when I did finally get to activate it, the whole process took just under an hour, on a 1MB connection!

Gareth Stafford

We've heard similar complaints from many disgruntled Half-Life fans, as support staff are in for some colourful calls regarding this situation, especially from those without an internet connection. But, while we sympathise with those affected, there's a good reason for this decision.

Valve has taken the rather brave route of implementing online activation and software unlocking in a bid to stop piracy. The theft of the game's code last year was a great setback, not only to Valve, but also to the software industry as a whole. Ever since this incident, awareness of software piracy has been higher than ever. Many companies are now desperately trying to come up with a sure fire way to protect their products. Valve's mix of CD protection serial numbers and online activation is perhaps the most comprehensive effort yet, and has already led to well over 20,000 illegitimate Steam users being found.

Sadly though, it would seem as though no form of security is perfect, and hours after the game's official release, cracks and patches were

"Yelling at your screen won't do any good, sir. Try yelling at your keyboard."

upgrading really depends on how you intend to use the hardware. Dual-layer DVDs certainly give you a great deal of storage, and as you work in video, you'll know already that video files can be huge. However, as you also point out, dual-layer hardware and discs are still expensive. It's also worth considering the availability of dual-layer DVD discs. At the moment, these are not only expensive, but are also fairly rare, meaning that as more and more companies begin to make them, we may see incompatibility with some drives as we did with standard DVD-R discs. Of course, in a relatively short time, the prices of new drives and media will drop just as they did with normal DVDs.

If you think you'll get a lot of use out of the new format, and you're already finding 4.7GB disc restrictive, then it may be worth the upgrade. But, for most users, we'd really suggest that you wait for a while longer to see how the market pans out.

already appear this online, with the whole downloadable game surfacing a couple of days later. Still, combating piracy is a worthy campaign by any software company, and we respect what Valve has tried to accomplish, even if it's had some undesirable side effects. Try not to get to down about it though, and listen to some soothing music on a Creative MuVo TX 512 on us.

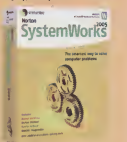
Gordon Freeman – taking a crowbar to piracy, but hitting fans in the process

Dual-layer DVDs offer huge storage, but they're expensive

Competition winners

Thanks to all our readers who entered the FSP and Symantec competitions in PC Utilities issue 54. Below are the lucky winners. Your prizes will be with you soon.

A H Cherrill, Cambridge
Harold Spiger, Portishead
Rachael Nolan, Birkenhead
Blu Langley, Newport



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PC Utilities has teamed up with Interactive Ideas (**www.interactiveideas.com**) to let two lucky readers win their own Digital Blue QX5 Computer Microscope. To enter, all you need to do is answer the question below and send your entry form to us by 22 January 2005. Alternatively, you can email your answer to **comp@livepublishing.co.uk**, putting 'Digital Blue competition' in the subject line.

Digital Blue microscope competition

Q Which of these can also be used to gain a close up view of objects?
☐ Magnifying glass ☐ Magnifying mug ☐ Magnifying perspex

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Rear view

Darren Ainsworth dons his best combat gear and dives into the depths of PC gaming. Fire in the hold!

I've just had a really busy weekend. After fighting a gang war, selling drugs and robbing a bank, I barely found time to assassinate JFK. And remarkably, the police didn't catch me, even though I shot down a helicopter while dressed as Huggy Bear.

A simulation of tennis or a game of online golf just doesn't cut it these days: instead, we want to maim and destroy everything around us. And great fun it is, too. There are any number of games that enable us to shoot shopkeepers, pimp prostitutes or punch passers by: GTA San Andreas is a huge sales hit, and JFK Reloaded is nothing if not controversial. The tabloids have had a field-day with this new breed of game: it's yet another sign that we are gradually slipping into a liberal quagmire of filth and unsightliness.

However, people all across the country are spending their spare time up to their eyes in urban decay and organised crime. I do feel the odd pang of guilt when I beat an old woman to death with a bunch of flowers, but knowing that many other people are enjoying the same game somehow makes it seem OK. But how did these games become so popular?

I'm pretty sure it has a lot to do with the type of people that become programmers. Statistically speaking, the average programmer is 27½, male, lives with his mum and enjoys watching The Sopranos. These very same statistics also tell us that 83% of programmers regularly fantasize about being Travis Bickle, Robert DeNiro's character in Taxi Driver. And further statistics, from the Institute of Fabricated Research, suggest that programmers are 95% similar to typical gamers, but have 5% longer hair.

Perhaps the world of computer games would be a fluffier, more moral place if programming attracted different types of people. Elderly members of the Women's Institute, perhaps. I'm sure we'd all happily trade our copies of The Getaway for a jam-making simulation. And I for one can't wait for the forthcoming Meals on Wheels: one near-sighted granny's mission to deliver wholesome dinners (including pudding) on the dangerous streets of Norwich. Can you guide her 1983 Austin Metro around the one-way system, whilst keeping the gravy from spilling as you traverse the speed bumps? If you don't make it in time, someone might point out that their peas are tepid.

"Can you guide her 1983 Austin Metro around the one-way system, whilst keeping the gravy from spilling as you traverse the speed bumps?"

I'm not sure that this 'make cakes, not war' approach will be entirely successful commercially. Games are a great way to submerge yourself in an alternative reality. In the real world, I'm fairly useless with a golf club, whether it be used for hitting a golf ball or for hitting motorists (I believe etiquette dictates that the correct club for this task is a driver). But in computer games, I've mastered both. I'm a kind of virtual cross between Jack Nicholson and Jack Nicklaus.

I don't really want to play a game that simulates real life, or even a sanitised version of real life. If I want real life, I can pop out of my front door, and have a bit of a wander in the park. If I want a sanitised version, I can move to Switzerland. There's a distinction between exploding a truck in a game, and exploding a truck in real life: one is harmless fun, and the other is very naughty and liable to result in all kinds of trouble.

Lets just hope gamers are able to work out which is which.

Next month

50 ways to make your PC fly

We explore the best tools and techniques to boost PC performance and get Windows running faster than ever!

ARE YOU BREAKING THE LAW?

You may not be downloading files from Kazaa or running cracked applications, but that doesn't mean your PC use is completely legal. Catch our complete exposé next month – before the police catch you.

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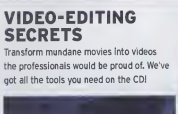

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